Wilfrid Clifford

OR

The Little Knight Again

By

Edith C. Kenyon

School Board for London.

CHELSEA PARK

LANGFORD ROAD SCHOOL

School

Phyllis Bond a Scholar

in Standard I attended punctually in accordance with the Board's regulations during the whole of the School Year, ended June 189 3.

A. Gurney Head Teacher.

BOOK AWARDED FOR PUNCTUAL AND REGULAR ATTENDANCE.

Mr White held another whispered consultation with his wife.

PAGE 39.

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W. & R. CHAMBERS, LIMITED
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

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EDITH C. KENYON

AUTHOR OF 'THE LITTLE KNIGHT;' 'ERNEST'S GOLDEN THREAD;' 'JACK'S HEROISM;' ETC.

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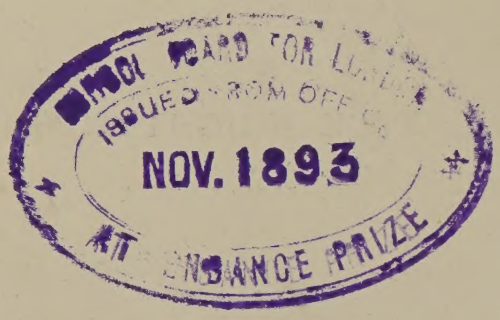

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PREFACE.

To those boys and girls who have not read my previous story, *The Little Knight*,* I would explain that the present tale is a continuation of the history of the Clifford family, and of Wilfrid Clifford's endeavour to emulate the knights of old. It was a great thing for a little boy to do, and though he often failed to act up to his ideal, and often made mistakes, we cannot help seeing that the very effort he was continually making raised him far above most of his companions. And it is good for us to read about it, for,

> Whene'er a noble deed is wrought,
> Whene'er is spoken a noble thought,
> Our hearts, in glad surprise,
> To higher levels rise.

BRADFORD. E. C. KENYON.

* *The Little Knight.* Messrs W. & R. Chambers. Price 1s.

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WILFRID CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I.

IN POVERTY.

Francis and Poverty—lovers were,
Of whom I weave at too great length my tale,
Their concord, of dear love the minister,
Their joyful air, their loving looks and kind,
Did holy thoughts in every spirit stir.

DANTE, *Il Paradiso.*

IT was a lovely day in June. Wild roses were out in the hedges, and so were budding honeysuckles and elderflowers; whilst the fresh green of the foliage and of the grass was very charming to the eye. Above, the sky was blue and cloudless, and the air was laden with sweet scents of flowers and of the newly-mown hay in the meadows.

A cheerful sound of hammering, chattering, and merry laughter was proceeding from a pretty cottage at the farthermost end of the village of Brentwood,

in Surrey, and now and then a passer-by stopped a moment or two to listen to the noise.

'These new people are very merry over their incoming,' said the villagers, and wondered at that a little, because they noticed that, when they alighted from the cab which brought them from Upper Brentwood Station, they were all dressed in mourning, and their mother, who was evidently a widow, looked pale and sad. 'What a sweet face she has!' remarked more than one; and others said it was plain she was *quite* a lady. And they knew, did those Brentwood people, what a lady is. Yes, and what a gentleman is too. They looked with great respect at the tall boy who so carefully assisted his mother and sisters to alight.

It was Wilfrid Clifford who had come to Brentwood with his mother and Connie, now a big stout girl of thirteen, and Gerard, who used to be the baby, when, five years before, they were separated for a few months for the first time, while their mother went out to Cannes to join their father. And then there was Tottie, really Mary, who was born just three years and a half ago—Tottie, who was all smiles and dimples and pretty speeches, and who did not understand that her father was dead and the old home was broken up, and they had become poor and glad to come away from those who knew them, to live in this pretty village,

because their dear old nurse, who was now married, wrote to say there was a nice cottage empty and the rent was very low. Nurse's married name was Mrs Goody: the children thought it was just the right name for one who was always good to them.

They were talking about her now, as they helped to arrange the furniture, which had arrived in a great van the day before.

'And I wish nurse hadn't got married,' said little Gerard, looking at her through the window as she washed the front-door step.

'What for, Jerry?' asked Wilfrid, pausing with his hammer in hand to search for another tack. He was fastening down a strip of oilcloth, near the door, to save the carpet from wear and tear, because his mother said it would have to last them a very long time.

'I know, 'cause she's got a howid husband!' exclaimed Tottie vehemently. 'He tooked her'——

'Oh, Tottie, *tooked?*' cried Gerard.

'He took her away from us once!' exclaimed Tottie, with growing indignation, as she contemplated her wrongs; 'and he'll do it again, I know he will, just when we're happy.'

'Of course he will!' cried Gerard, with great disgust.

'That he will!' laughed Wilfrid. 'She's his wife now.'

'What 's wife?' inquired Tottie gravely.

'Ah, it means he 's got to wait on her and take care of her, and see she doesn't get tired, and give her the nicest seat in the carriage—oh, perhaps she won't have a carriage—well, give her all the money she wants, just as father used to do to mother, you know,' replied Gerard.

'Was father mother's wife?' demanded Tottie.

'Yes, of course,' said Connie impatiently; 'and you 're only a little boy, Gerard, so of course you don't know that it isn't likely that Mr Goody will be as nice to nurse as *our* father was to mother. But do be quiet, Tottie;' as the little girl was beginning to exclaim that her father was the best man in all the world, 'she 'll hear. She 's only in the next room, and it makes her cry to hear about poor father now.'

'I wish she wouldn't,' said Wilfrid suddenly, and with great earnestness. 'Oh, I wish she wouldn't.'

'But why, Wilfie?' asked Connie, the tears coming to her eyes. 'He was such a'—— And she could not say any more for the sobs which would come.

'But we think, we feel sure, that he 's gone to Paradise, and it must be so beautiful there. I do think we ought to be glad. I have been so happy ever since we came here, to think that, however pretty this place is, it can't be half so beautiful as where he 's gone.'

'What's it like, Wilfie?' asked Tottie, opening her big blue eyes and looking up wonderingly at him.

He seemed embarrassed for a moment. Boylike, he felt a little shy of talking much about such things, and he was not sure how Connie would take it. In the holidays Connie and he seemed a little farther apart than they used to be before he went to school. And so he only repeated very earnestly: 'It's very beautiful, Tottie, very beautiful indeed.'

'Then I'm glad papa's there,' said Tottie.

A few moments after, Mrs Clifford entered the room, and said, with a smile, 'I've been listening to you, dears, the wall is so very thin: we must be careful, or else we shall often overhear one another.'

'Mother, did you mind?' asked Wilfrid, in some distress, because he might have seemed to be suggesting she was wrong.

'No, no,' she said, 'you did right to remind me, Wilfrid.—Children,' she went on, turning to them, 'there was once a person who was walking on a broad hill-top, and she caught a glimpse of a very beautiful country; but afterwards, when she was walking in the valley again, she forgot just for a little time what a lovely place it was.'

'Were you the person, mother?' asked Gerard, leaning fondly against her. But she did not answer

him, only she smiled, and so he knew he was not far wrong.

'Wilfie, you're hanging that picture quite crooked!' cried Connie, presently. 'Do attend to what you are doing.'

'I'm sure it's straight!' declared Wilfrid; then mischievously, 'Some people are *so fat* they can't see quite straight.'

Connie did not like that, and she looked so cross that her mother was glad that they were interrupted just then by Sarah, the new little maid found for them by Mrs Goody, who wanted to know if she might bring tea in.

'Yes,' said her mistress; and then many hands made light work, and in a few minutes the table was cleared of hammer, tacks, books, pictures, and many other things.

As they sat down to tea, Wilfrid noticed his mother seemed very tired, so he ran and got her a footstool, and then stood by her side and passed the cups to the others as she filled them. Then he cut the bread and helped every one to butter, but contrived to take none himself, for he saw there was very little, and had heard his mother telling Sarah it would have to do, for now she could not afford to buy much butter. And as he cut up his bread rather busily, so that his mother might not notice it was dry, he chattered merrily about some of the oddities

in their new abode, declaring it to be an advantage the rooms were small, for then they could soon reach everything they wanted.

When the table was cleared, he again set to work to put finishing touches to the little room, whilst his mother, with Mrs Goody's help, hung up the window curtains, and Connie arranged the books in the one small bookcase.

At last, long after the little ones had gone to bed, the work was all done. Mrs Goody went home, and Mrs Clifford, Connie, and Wilfrid sat down to have a little talk together.

'Shall we be so very poor now, mother?' asked Connie, a little wistfully. She was old enough to understand how very, very inconvenient it often is to have very little money in one's purse.

'I 'm afraid so, dear,' replied her mother sadly.

'How is it, mother?' asked Wilfrid, 'you said you would tell me when you had time to explain.'

'Well, dear, you must know that the insurance company with whom your father insured his life for four thousand pounds has failed. Every year your dear father paid them a large sum of money that we might have a nice little income if he died; but it is all lost—all lost.' And she sighed deeply. It was not that she cared so much for herself, but she loved her children so dearly that it was very

painful to her to think that they would suffer want, and that it would be hard for them to get a good education.

'But when did this company fail, mother? When was our money lost?' inquired Wilfrid, with an air of great importance, for he remembered the old lawyer said, after the funeral, that he would have to take care of his mother and sisters.

'I heard about it just the day before your father died,' said his mother softly.

'Oh, mother, did he know? Did poor father know?'

'No. Thank God, I kept that blow from him. He died thinking he was leaving us all quite comfortable.'

Wilfrid looked at his mother with admiration that was too deep for words. How bravely she had kept the bad news to herself!

'It was a good thing that!' remarked Connie. 'But, mother dear, you have some money, haven't you? Some of your own, I mean.'

'A very little, which—which is all we now have to live upon.'

'But won't Aunt Merritt help us?' asked Wilfrid.

'I hope so, my boy. I have written to tell her all, but strange to say she does not answer.'

'Shan't I have to go back to school?'

'Not at present, dear. Afterwards we may

find a way to send you to some other school. Dr Metcalf's will be too expensive.'

Wilfrid's countenance fell. He liked his school, and loved Dr and Mrs Metcalf, and, strange as it may seem to some boys, he liked his lessons too, and longed to get on and become learned, so that he might the more ably do a man's work in the world.

Connie, too, looked very much vexed. 'And shan't I be able to have nice new frocks, and presents, and money, when I want it?' she asked.

Mrs Clifford's sad face looked sadder for a moment or two, then rousing herself with an effort, she said, in quite cheerful tones: 'No, Connie; but both you and Wilfrid will have a golden opportunity of showing how well you can bear this trial of poverty. And, after all, it's only what many people have chosen to submit to. The knights of old,' and here she smiled at Wilfrid, 'used to take an oath that they would always be poor. It was one of their rules that poverty should be their lot.'

'Yes, I know,' said Wilfrid with animation; 'their rules enjoined upon both the Knights Templars and the Hospitallers poverty and humility.'

'Then there was St Francis of Assisi,' said his mother, 'who was rich, but who gave up all his wealth and became poor, because he thought by doing so he would be better able to follow the example of Christ—who had not where to lay His

head. He, Francis, called poverty his bride; he courted her, he chose her for his own.'

'But I don't like to be poor,' said Connie. 'There was a girl once at our school'—Connie had been at school about a year—'who was poor, and could never pay for such nice things as the others, and—and she was often unhappy, the other girls did look down on her so.'

'Then the other girls were very foolish and very un-Christlike,' said her mother. 'I hope,' she added anxiously, 'that *you* were always *doubly kind* to that poor girl.'

Connie coloured deeply, and preferred not to answer; indeed, her conscience troubled her very much as she remembered that *she* used to tease the poor girl as much as any one.

'I'll try to like being poor,' said Wilfrid very earnestly. 'Do you suppose the Knights, or St Francis, liked it *all at once*, mother?'

'Scarcely, I should think. But then they had such a very good reason for liking it, that they could hardly help doing so.'

'*I*'ve a very good reason,' said Wilfrid. '*I*'ll try to like it too.'

Mrs Clifford thought she knew what his reason was: though he hardly ever mentioned the subject now, she was well aware that he had never forgotten that she once told him it was possible for him to

have a heart like the heart of the best knight that ever lived. She felt happy about her boy, even though the trial of poverty was threatening to overshadow his path, but she looked a little anxiously at Connie.

'And haven't you a good reason, too, for submitting patiently to this trial which has come upon us?' she asked.

Then Connie's better self triumphed, and looking up into the dear troubled eyes, she too said bravely: 'Yes, if it 's only to help you to bear it, mother dear, I won't once complain.'

'That 's right, Connie,' said her mother, kissing her. 'And now you must both go to bed. And take care, Wilfrid, that you don't bump your head against the top of your tiny attic.'

He laughed, and with a warning, 'Mind and go carefully through your door, it isn't very wide!' to Connie, ran up-stairs and shut himself in his own little domain in the roof. Connie had the other attic, and certainly the door was narrow; but she did not quite appreciate Wilfrid's joke! The little maid slept in the nursery with Tottie, and Gerard had a snug little crib in his mother's room.

Before Wilfrid undressed, he took a paper of very neat handwriting out of his little desk, and pinned it on the wall over his small dressing-table. This paper contained the following words:

RULES OF KNIGHTHOOD.

(As far as I can find out about them.)

Chivalry recognised nothing higher or nobler than the condition of a knight, and the fame of every man was borne by the mouths of minstrels and palmers, not tied to his name by a title.

The Knights Templars whose rules, like those of the Hospitallers, enjoined humility and poverty.

The Red Cross Knights, or Templars, took vows of obedience to a Grand-master whom they had appointed, and also bound themselves to purity of life, to mutual assistance, and that they would fight continually against the infidel, never turning back from less than four adversaries.

The Order of St John was divided into the several classes of knights, clergy, and serving brothers. The knights were highest in rank, and commanded in battle or in the hospital; the serving brothers filled the offices of esquires, or assisted the clergy in attendance upon the sick. The vows, which were taken by all without distinction, included the duties of chastity, of obedience to the council, and of a renunciation individually of all worldly possessions.

No Knight of St John might offer any ransom for himself save his sword and scarf; but for the redemption of their poor fellow-Christians their wealth was ready.

Wilfrid read these sentences deliberately through, then he said to himself, 'Yes, I think that's about it. *I* mean to do as those knights did. And I don't want to have what I do *tied to my name by a title.* I want to *be* the thing itself. Not to *look* the thing.'

He sat down on the side of his little bed, and began to wonder why he felt as if he had not quite acted up to his high creed that day. Was it because he

had twice vexed Connie that he felt so uneasy? 'I shall really have to stop teasing her so,' he thought. 'Poor Connie! It is so tempting to tease her sometimes; but she does hate it so.'

And then his last reflection, as he drew the bed-clothes up over his head, was that as poverty was enjoined on the knights, it was just as well he had been made poor.

CHAPTER II.

DIFFICULT FIRST DAYS.

But dream not helm and harness,
  The sign of valour true;
Peace hath higher test of manhood
  Than battle ever knew.

Wouldst know him now? Behold him,
  . . . . .
Walking his round of duty
  Serenely day by day,
With the strong man's hand of labour
  And childhood's heart of play.

True as the knight of story,
  Sir Lancelot and his peers,
Brave in his calm endurance
  As they in tilt of spears.

J. G. WHITTIER, *The Hero.*

HE next morning, when Wilfrid awoke, he was quite puzzled to think where he was. The little room looked poor and bare in the light that streamed through the skylight window. It was very different from his bedroom in his old home. The slanting whitewashed roof and shabby furniture, which he

had magnanimously chosen for himself the day before—picking out the very worst that the others might have their rooms nice—all reminded him that a change had taken place in his circumstances. But then his eyes fell on his 'Rules of Knighthood,' pinned conspicuously over the dressing-table, and he said to himself, 'In poverty and humility—that's the way to be a true knight;' and then he jumped up, and in a quarter of an hour was dressed, and was going down-stairs—stepping very lightly, so as not to wake his mother or the children.

'Sarah,' he said, putting his head in at the kitchen door, and considerably startling that young maiden, 'how are you getting on? Is breakfast nearly ready? We must have everything nice for mother, Sarah; and flowers on the table.'

'La!' said Sarah, in surprise, 'and who's to gather them, I'd like to know, and me as busy as busy?'

'Oh, I'll get them,' said Wilfrid; 'you see my mother's been always used to have things beautiful—beautiful. I didn't half like the way you put tea on the table last night,' reprovingly.

'La!' said Sarah again, 'well, I never!' She began to feel quite alarmed. 'And, indeed, I'll do my best,' she said humbly. 'But, oh dear, the fire won't burn, and there's water to fetch from the well. I shall never get the kettle to boil. And

there 's the room to sweep yet, and the breakfast to set, and such lots of boots to clean!'

'Let me help you,' said Wilfrid eagerly, thinking that here at least was a damsel in distress.

Sarah looked at him doubtfully. Would her mistress like it?

'What can I do?' asked the boy. 'Be quick and tell me.'

'Well, if you wouldn't mind, Master Wilfrid,' said Sarah, hesitatingly.

'No, I don't mind—go on.'

'If I had just a canful of drinking water from the well.'

'Where is it?'

'Didn't you see it? Right in the middle of the village. There 's a stone wall against it, and a cover over it, and a helm-tree standing by the wall.'

'Where 's the can?' Wilfrid seized it, and hurried out.

'What a pretty village!' he thought, as he looked at the quaint old-fashioned cottages standing each in its own garden. Then there was the winding street through their midst, with a merry dashing streamlet running along by the side of it, and a few willow-trees on its banks. The water in the stream, however, was not the drinking water he wanted, so he turned away from it to look for

the stone wall and the elm-tree, and the covered well. He soon found the place, and then saw that two or three people with buckets and cans were standing by the well, waiting for their turn to draw up the long bucket hooked on to a chain, which was lowered sixty feet at least to the clear cool water below.

The villagers stared at Wilfrid, but he smiled, and said 'Good-morning,' pleasantly, and then they returned the greeting, and the man who was just then drawing up the bucket, said politely: 'Here, young master, I 'll fill your can for you.'

'Thank you,' said Wilfrid; and then, seeing a very poor girl who was waiting with a pitcher, he added, 'But won't you please fill her pitcher first. Ladies first, you know,' with a bright smile.

'Well, I never!' said the man. 'Here now, Molly Smith, 'old your pitcher; there now, you ought to thank that young gentleman. Now, sir,' to Wilfrid, who thanked him eagerly as he filled the can.

Poor Molly took up her pitcher and went away, but she did not utter a word of thanks. Wilfrid thought she looked cowed and miserable; as if, too, she needed many other things than the cold water she had come to fetch, so he hurried after her.

'Can I carry your pitcher for you?' he asked kindly.

'No.'

'Do let me. You look tired.'

'You 've got your own to carry.'

'But I can easily carry both,' he said, taking the pitcher from her. 'Where do you live?'

The girl pointed to a very old cottage at a little distance.

'We live there,' she said. 'Mother 's ill, and can't get no better, the doctor says, and we 're very poor; there 's eight of us, and we haven't anything to eat this morning.' Then she broke down, and began to cry.

Wilfrid was in great distress. Setting down his can and the pitcher, he felt in his pockets for money, but alas! there was none there, and he remembered he had given the cabman all he had the day before, because his mother had not sufficient change.

'Have you really no money?' he asked.

'No.'

'Nor food?'

'No.'

'Oh, then you must come home with me. I 'll give you some bread at all events.'

'Thank you,' said the girl, looking pleased.

When they arrived at Wilfrid's home, he found his mother had not yet come down, and Sarah was busy in the room; so, being left to his own devices, he went into the small pantry, took a loaf off the shelf, and returning to the poor girl, gave it to her.

The tears came into her eyes as she thanked him again, and then hurried away.

Wilfrid was busy attempting to fill the kettle, and spilling not a little water over the hearth, when Sarah returned to the kitchen.

'Oh, I 'll do that!' she cried. 'Do please stop, Master Wilfrid, you 're putting the fire out.'

'Well then, Sarah, what shall I do next?' he asked, giving up the task to her.

'Could you clean those boots?' asked she doubtfully, pointing to the four pairs of little boots on the floor.

'Yes, of course.'

'Then the things are in that cupboard under the table. But I 'm afraid it 's not fit work for such as you.'

Wilfrid smiled compassionately. She knew nothing of the knightly spirit he was trying to cultivate —the humility in poverty he was anxious to possess. But he only said, 'It 's all right, Sarah,' and got out some brushes and some mysterious black substance in a saucer, and began to brush vigorously at a pair of Connie's boots. He laid the black stuff on, and brushed away until his arm ached and he felt quite hot and tired; but, alas! he could not produce the desired effect. The boots looked duller and browner, not blacker as he proceeded. He did not like to think he could not do such a simple thing as black

a pair of boots! He wouldn't be beaten by them, he said to himself.

Then the door opened gently, and Gerard appeared, looking fresh and bright, and exclaiming, 'Oh, Wilfie, what are you doing? May I help you?'

'No, thanks. But, Gerard, I wish you'd run in the garden and get a few flowers for the table, and a rose, mind a very nice rose, to put beside mother's plate, as father used to do.'

The little boy nodded and disappeared through the outer door. Then Sarah returned to the kitchen.

'Oh, Sarah, they won't shine!' sighed Wilfrid. 'I can't get a polish on them!'

Sarah ran up to him and snatched the brush from his hand; then she burst out laughing.

'La! Master Wilfrid,' she exclaimed, 'whatever are you doin' putting *black-lead* on to the boots? Why, that's what I do the grates with! It isn't for boots!'

Poor Wilfrid! he coloured and looked abashed for a moment; then he said, 'Oh, I beg your pardon, Sarah, I've made a mistake!'

'Mistake! I should think so!' cried the little maid. 'But let them be, Master Wilfrid, I see you can't do such work.' Then in a tone of alarm, 'Oh, do go and get your hands washed! La! how

you've dirtied your jacket, and whatever'll your ma' say?'

'I'll put it all right in two minutes,' said Wilfrid; and was bounding up-stairs when a cry from Sarah arrested his steps. She was evidently in distress again. He returned to the kitchen.

'The loaf!' cried Sarah, 'wherever has it gone? Have you done anything with the loaf of bread?'

'Oh yes,' said Wilfrid, quite frankly; 'I've given it to a poor girl, who hadn't anything to eat.'

'You've given it to a poor girl!' said Sarah, aghast.

'Yes. She hadn't anything to eat, you know, and her poor mother and the children hadn't either. You must get another loaf, Sarah, and be quick.'

'But we haven't another loaf!' almost screamed Sarah in her excitement. 'We haven't had time to bake yet; and Mrs Goody brought us that loaf yesterday.'

'But you can fetch another from the baker's,' said Wilfrid, feeling in his pocket for the coin, which, alas! wasn't there, and then colouring again. It certainly was very awkward to be poor. He ran up-stairs, intending to go to his mother's room, but just remembered, as he was about to tap at the door, that he had better make himself presentable first. So he ran up to his little attic; but—but he had never before found it so difficult to wash his hands

clean. The black-lead was not easy to get off; and then his jacket had some ugly stains upon it. When at last he had sponged these off, and run down to the sitting-room—for his mother was not in her bedroom—he found her there, looking with dismay at the empty bread-board.

Sarah stood by, with a very red face, and little Gerard, with his hands full of roses, was looking on in much astonishment.

'Good-morning, Wilfrid,' said Mrs Clifford, turning to him. 'Perhaps you can explain what has become of the bread?'

'Oh yes, mother,' said Wilfrid, quite eager to do so. 'I gave it to a poor girl, because she and her sick mother and the children had nothing—*nothing* for breakfast.'

'But, my boy, we've nothing, or at least next to nothing, now.'

Wilfrid looked at the table; there was a little butter, a little milk, and the teapot—of course full of tea—and that was all.

'Isn't there really any more bread for us?' he asked.

'No, we haven't any more in the house.'

'I'm very sorry, mother.' Then in a low tone, 'I forgot we were quite poor.'

Mrs Clifford smiled as she said, 'There is a story that a certain Crispin, afterwards called St Crispin,

used to steal leather from the rich to make into shoes for the poor! But I never heard of any one stealing from the poor to give to the poor!'

'Oh, I beg your pardon, mother,' said Wilfrid. 'But you always used to let me give a slice of bread to a poor tramp at home; and there was a whole family starving, and—and I thought you would let me.'

'Well, dear, I know you meant to do right, but another time I should like to be consulted. Now, here is sixpence, run as fast as you can to the nearest shop and buy us a loaf.'

Wilfrid did so, and on his return he found his mother thanking Gerard for the pretty rose he had put beside her plate. 'It was so thoughtful of you, dear, and so very kind,' she said.

'I knew you would like it,' said Gerard, taking all the credit to himself, which surprised and grieved Wilfrid considerably. He resolved to have a talk with the little fellow when they were alone; but, of course, he said nothing about it before the others, lest he should place him in an awkward position.

'There is the postman,' said Mrs Clifford, as he passed the window. 'Run, Wilfrid, and see if there is a letter from Aunt Merritt.'

Wilfrid ran to the door, but returned in a moment or two with a newspaper, but no letter in his hand.

'It is very strange!' said Mrs Clifford, and her

pale face looked pained and harassed. 'She must be away from home.'

'Perhaps we shall hear to-morrow,' said Wilfrid, trying to cheer her. 'She's sure to write, because she's really kind, isn't she, mother?'

'Yes, she is indeed. Oh, I'm sure she'll help us,' said his mother. Then she added more cheerfully, 'Now, suppose you all go for a walk, or you can pretend you are exploring the neighbourhood. Nurse says there are wild strawberries in the wood, and I saw a great many cowslips in a field; you might get a quantity for cowslip wine?'

'Oh, what fun!' cried Connie; 'but who'll make it into wine?'

'Nurse said she would, if you would gather the flowers and then pick them.'

'Oh, what nice work that will be!' said Wilfrid.

'May I go too?' asked Gerard.

'Yes.'

'And me? and me?' asked Tottie.

'Yes.—Wilfie and Connie, you will take care of the little ones.'

'Oh yes, mother,' they both cried; and then they all ran into the kitchen to get their boots on.

'And oh, what's the matter with mine?' cried Connie. 'Why, you haven't brightened them, Sarah!'

'Well, I couldn't; Master Wilfie'——

'Oh, Sarah, I never thought you 'd tell!' cried Wilfrid reproachfully.

'Oh, how ugly they are!' cried Connie, 'what have you been doing to them?'

Wilfrid did not answer, but Sarah began to laugh, and he did not like that. No, rather than share a secret with her, he would tell the truth; so he confessed the mistake he had made, and then they all laughed, Wilfrid too, and were very merry about it.

So they went into the fields and gathered a quantity of the beautiful yellow cowslips, and when they came home they sat round the table and picked them, and then carried all the 'pips,' as they called the corollas, to Nurse Goody to be made into wine.

During the days which followed there were many times when Wilfrid and Connie—who had been used to having plenty of pocket-money—found it very inconvenient to be poor, but they tried to be patient. Only sometimes Connie looked vexed when the dinner was poorer and scantier than usual; but Wilfrid saw how troubled his mother looked, and tried to help her by being more cheerful and kind and attentive than usual.

Every day, to Mrs Clifford's intense disappointment, the postman failed to bring the letter she was so anxiously expecting from her sister, and at last

she was obliged to make up her mind to dismiss Sarah, as she found she could not afford to keep a maid.

'I wish I could earn some money,' said Wilfrid, when he heard of this. 'I must try to get work. Boys can earn wages, I know.'

'But they do it by doing quite common work,' cried Connie.

'Well, I can do common work too. It would be better for me to do common work than mother.'

Mrs Clifford smiled. 'Even common work may be made noble if it is done with a noble spirit,' she said. 'But, Wilfie, my greatest trouble about you is that you are not able to go on with your lessons just now. You were getting on so well at Dr Metcalf's, and now you will be forgetting your Latin.'

'Oh no, I'll do some by myself. I've been thinking, mother, if I get up early every morning I might do some *Cæsar* before breakfast.'

'Or you might sit down directly after breakfast,' suggested his mother.

'But I hope I shall get some other work to do,' said Wilfrid, then perhaps you need not part with Sarah.'

So Wilfrid began to look about for employment; he consulted Mrs Goody, who cried when he said she must try to find him a place as errand-boy.

'But you 're a young gentleman, Master Wilfrid,' she said.

'What does that matter? I hope, nurse, if I become an errand-boy, I shall be a young gentleman just the same,' he replied.

'Bless you!' said nurse, 'of course you will. Only how are folks to know it when you 're running errands and carrying parcels.'

'I don't care a pin whether people know it or not,' said Wilfrid stoutly. 'If I *am it*, what does it matter what they *think?* A gentleman, you know, nurse,' he went on, 'is one who never does a mean or underhand thing, and who is gentle and considerate for others, and doesn't put himself forward, but is humble about himself; and doesn't always look out for his own rights, but takes care to stick up for others; and I don't see why he mayn't be that if he 's an errand-boy as well.'

'Well, you 're all that,' said Mrs Goody approvingly.

'So if you hear of a situation, you 'll let me know, nurse,' said Wilfrid, rising to go.

'That I will, Master Wilfrid; and tell your mother, please, that if Sarah goes I 'll do everything I can to make it easier for her, and I shall never want any pay; I should break my heart if she offered it me.'

'Good-bye, nurse,' said Wilfrid, 'and thank you.

I never knew any one more considerate and kind than you.'

But Mrs Goody never told him of a situation; she could not bring herself to help him into such a position. 'No,' she said to her husband, 'it 's not the sort of work for such as he, and my poor dear master, who 's dead and buried, never thought his son would have to do that.'

But one day, as Wilfrid was passing through the village, he saw a notice up in the post-office, which was also a stationer's shop—'WANTED, A BOY'—and he stood looking at it a long time, and then walked boldly in.

CHAPTER III.

AUNT MERRITT'S OFFER.

Life hath its regal natures yet—
True, tender, brave, and sweet!
J. G. WHITTIER, *The Hero.*

'I HAVE seen your advertisement for a boy,' began Wilfrid, fluently enough, and then stopped to think what he should say next.

'Yes, sir,' said the stout man behind the counter, 'that was *not* difficult to see.'

'And I beg to apply for the situation,' went on Wilfrid.

'You!' said the man, opening his eyes wide with astonishment. 'You don't mean for yourself?'

'I do,' replied Wilfrid, boldly; 'I want to earn wages. You see I want some money, and I don't mind a little hard work. I think I should really like it.'

'Let me see,' said the man, whose name, as printed in large letters over the shop door, was

Thomas White; 'are not you the son of the lady that 's come to live at Ivy Cottage?'

'Yes.'

'Bessie!' called the man, looking back into the shop. 'Come here; I want you.'

Thereupon a thin woman came in, and the stout man began whispering to her and pointing to Wilfrid, who coloured a little and turned to look at some papers on the counter. What bad manners they had! But, of course, they knew no better.

'Young gentleman,' said the woman, rather sharply, 'does your ma know you 've come here on this errand?'

'No,' said Wilfrid, colouring still more; 'I 've only just seen your advertisement myself. But I believe my mother would be glad if I could find work. You see we are very poor, and it is for her sake I want to earn money. I told her I should do it as soon as I could.'

'But what can you do?

Wilfrid paused a moment before replying. He was on the point of saying he knew a little Latin and less Greek, some Euclid and more arithmetic; but he remembered that his other and more recently learned accomplishments would be more likely to win the shopkeeper's approval, so he answered, 'I can run errands very quickly, and fetch water from the well, and I can clean knives, and '——

'Well, well. Can you write a good hand?' asked Mr White.

'Try me,' said Wilfrid, with a smile of pleasure, for he knew his handwriting was good.

The man handed him some paper and a pen, and asked him to write his name and address, which he did entirely to Mr White's satisfaction.

'I daresay he 'll learn the telegraph-work quick,' said the latter to his wife.

'Yes,' she said, 'and it 's a telegraph-boy you want most.'

'I 'll learn very quickly if you 'll let me try,' said Wilfrid. 'I can always learn things when I try,' he added simply.

'And if I engage you, you will have to carry telegrams out, and run errands, and serve in the shop, and carry parcels home to the customers,' said Thomas White. 'And you 'll have to be here from eight in the morning till eight at night—with half an hour allowed for dinner and half an hour for tea—and you 'll often find it tiring, no doubt. And I 'm afraid you 're not very strong.'

'Oh, but I 'm stronger than I look,' said Wilfrid. 'And what wages shall I have, sir?'

Mr White held another whispered consultation with his wife; then he said, 'Six shillings a week for the first month, and afterwards seven, if not more.'

'Oh, thank you,' said Wilfrid, delightedly. Six

shillings a week, and soon seven, if not more, seemed to him to be very good wages indeed. He would take them all to his mother; and how the money would help her!

'When am I to begin?' he asked.

'As soon as you like. But I should advise you to run home and tell your mother all about it, then perhaps you'll come back and tell us what she says, and I'll step along and see her about it if she likes.'

'Thank you very much,' said Wilfrid, lifting his cap and smiling at Mrs White, and then running off in great haste.

'His mother won't hear of it, you'll see,' said the shopkeeper to his wife. 'What a nice boy he is!'

'And such a gentleman!' said Mrs White. 'No, you needn't expect you'll ever have to set him to sweep the shop out. 'Those smooth white hands of his were made for something very different!'

'Mother, I've got a place!' said Wilfrid, running into their little sitting-room, where his mother sat alone, with an open letter in her hand, and a happier look upon her face than it had borne for long.

'A place!' she said wonderingly. 'My dear, what do you mean?'

'It's at the post-office. Such nice work! I'm to learn telegraphy, and write out the telegrams and carry them to people, and I'm to run errands and

wait on people—customers, you know. And I 'm to have six shillings a week, mother! only think, six shillings a week the first four weeks, and then seven, and perhaps more. You can keep Sarah now, for I 've been calculating her wages only come to two shillings and sixpence a week, and then there 'll be all the rest for something else; and I shall sleep at home and have my meals at home too, mother, so I shall be with you a great deal. But what 's the matter? Are not you glad?'

'Wilfrid,' said his mother, 'I 've just had a letter from your Aunt Merritt, and I 'm so glad, so thankful!'

'A letter from Aunt Merritt! Oh, what does she say?'

'She says they have been abroad travelling from place to place, and my letters have only just reached them since their return to London. And she offers a permanent home for Connie with her own girls, and will pay all expenses of education for one boy —you or Gerard.'

'Only one of us?'

'Yes; but, of course, she expects it will be you. She writes very kindly about you, Wilfie. She says your uncle will feel it such a pleasure to help you on.'

'Does she say she 'll send *you* any money, mother?'

'No; but she really offers a great deal. It costs so very much to pay for a boy's education, and a girl's, too, for that matter. I could not possibly allow her to do more.'

'But if I went and Connie went, you and the children would still be very poor?'

'Well, we should be rather better off than we are now as regards food; for, of course, three eat less than five, and I think we should have just enough to keep us.'

'Could you have Sarah back?'

'No, I'm afraid not. But I can easily do the work.'

'Mother,' said Wilfrid, and he spoke with great feeling, 'I couldn't bear to go away to school and think you were lighting fires and cleaning boots. I should be miserable, mother, *miserable.* I couldn't do my lessons or anything!'

'But I should be happy if I knew you were getting on with your studies. And then—then some day you would be able to support me, Wilfie, as you would like to do!'

'How long would it be first?' said Wilfrid. 'I'm twelve now.'

'Perhaps in twelve more years,' she said, laying her hand caressingly on his golden hair.

'Twelve years! And you drudging in the kitchen all that time. Oh, mother, that will not do at all!'

Then he jumped up, threw his arms round her neck, and said pleadingly, 'Then there's poor Gerard; how would you educate him? Why, he'd never get to learn as much as I know now, and you could never afford to send him to school; and he's such a clever little fellow, mother.' Then he went on more pleadingly still, 'Let Gerard go, and you and I and Tottie will stay here, and I'll take this situation, and then we can keep Sarah and be so comfortable.'

'But, Wilfrid dear, you don't know what a trouble it would be to me to see you lose this chance of a good education. Your whole future depends on it, my boy. Without education you cannot enter any of the learned professions, nor take that place in life which your father and I have always hoped you would one day occupy. Just think, your uncle talks of your going back to Dr Metcalf's for another year with your cousin Sydney, and then he means to send you both to a public school—perhaps Harrow. Then he will send you to either Oxford or Cambridge, and then you can afterwards either be a clergyman, like father'—and a very wistful look in her face showed Wilfrid how she longed for it—'or you can enter the legal or medical profession.'

'But, mother, poor Gerard, is he to have no chance of all that?'

'Oh, Gerard is so young,' she said, 'something may turn up for him in a few years.'

Wilfrid was silent a moment or two. He had unwound his arms from his mother's neck and was standing with them tightly clasped together. He certainly realised, as much as it was possible for so young a boy to do so, that it would make an immense difference to his whole life if he, and not Gerard, were to be educated with his cousin.

'Mother,' he said at last, and now he hid his face against her shoulder that she might not see how red it was, nor what an effort he had to make to say the words, 'you did say once it was possible for me to have some day a heart like the heart of the best knight that ever lived; and I am trying to have that, mother, I'm always thinking about it—and that made me even glad to be poor—but I ask you this question, What knight would ever have thrust his little brother on one side that he might get the best things for himself? And what knight—what knight, mother, would have let his own mother—a delicate lady—work like a servant when he had two strong hands to work for her? Could he have done so? Can I do so?'

Mrs Clifford was silent. She was deeply touched. How could she press her noble boy to do what his whole soul revolted from? If she succeeded in persuading him to be the one to go, he would not

be so self-sacrificing as if he gave up all for her sake and his brother's; she would hinder him from doing what was very meritorious. But if, on the other hand, she allowed him to stay, his earnings would be most acceptable, and in her lonely life it would be an inexpressible comfort to have him with her. And if he had to work hard—well, a little hard work would not hurt him, and, as she had said to him and Connie, work done in a noble spirit became noble too. Then, perhaps, he would study a little at home, and she would try to help him to keep up what he knew.

'Mother,' said Wilfrid, suddenly, 'have you forgotten, "In poverty and humility;" that was how the old knights got their knightliness.' And his tone said, 'Would you deprive me of this extra opportunity of being like them?'

Mrs Clifford began to yield. 'What is this situation you spoke of, dear?' she asked.

Wilfrid told her, describing it all in glowing colours. Then she said gently, 'I must see this Mr White. Yes, and I must have time to think. I will write and thank your aunt and uncle, and will say that in a week's time I will let them know which boy I will send. And, Wilfie, we will ask God to direct our steps,' she added in so low a tone that he could only just hear her words.

'Yes, mother; but meantime'——

'Meantime what?' she asked.

'Mr White wants a boy immediately. Would you mind,' very pleadingly, 'if I went a few days on trial?'

'Perhaps that would be better,' said his mother. 'I will see Mr White and ascertain if you can do so. Go and ask him if he will come and see me about it this evening.'

'Oh, thank you, mother,' said Wilfrid, running off at once.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DECISION.

The star of the unconquered will,
He rises in my breast,
Serene, and resolute, and still,
And calm, and self-possessed.

LONGFELLOW, *The Light of Stars.*

WILFRID found it very hard work being Mr White's errand-boy; he was often footsore and weary. The work, too, was frequently rough and unpleasant, but he did it all so cheerfully—he was so quick and clever—that his master was delighted with him, and told him on the last evening of the trial-week that he would give him seven shillings a week at once if his mother would consent to let him stay.

This was good news for Wilfrid, as he had made up his mind to ask his mother to allow him to keep the situation. He knew now better than before what hard work was; but the more he thought of that, the more he shrank from the idea of letting

poor little Gerard run the risk of having to take a similar place; and he was more determined than ever that, if he could prevent it, his mother should not be left alone with the little ones. The old lawyer had told him to take care of her; he would do so; every law of chivalry commanded it. He said to himself he would be no true knight if he deserted her for his own advancement.

When he came in to supper that evening, she was sitting alone by the open window, through which came the sweet scent of the roses and mignonette in the garden.

'Is that you, Wilfie?' she asked, without turning, and her voice was a little unsteady, as if she had been thinking of things which made her sad. 'But,' she went on more brightly, as he stooped and kissed her, 'see what I have found for you,' and she handed him an old well-worn volume he had never seen before.

'*The History of Chivalry*, by G. P. R. James,' he read. 'Oh, mother, how delightful! Why, this *will* be interesting to me. Was this one of father's books?'

'Yes,' she said; 'but look on the fly-leaf.'

Wilfrid did not need to be told twice. He looked, and read his father's name, and underneath, his own.

He was of course delighted, and thanked his

mother warmly; then she said, 'Where do you think I've been to-day, Wilfie?'

The boy could not guess, so she said she had been to see poor Molly Smith's mother. 'I should have gone long since,' she said, 'but I knew it would not be in my power to offer them pecuniary assistance, and there are others, our vicar for instance, who no doubt look after them. However, I find they ought not to be so destitute, for though Mrs Smith is a widow, she has two sons who ought to support her. Work is plentiful here, and, if they would do it, the little family would be quite comfortable. But Mike, the eldest son, is an idle, worthless fellow, and he leads his brother into all sorts of wrong-doing. As I came out I met Mr Duncan, the vicar of Brentwood, and he told me all about them.'

Connie entered just then, and they had supper. The little girl was in high spirits. 'It will be nice not to have perpetual rice pudding, or bread and butter! And I wonder will aunt let me have just as pretty frocks as Madge and Beatrice. And what are you looking so black for, Wilfie? Of course I'm sorry to leave mother; aren't I, dear,' appealing to her. 'And I do hope, Wilfrid, you'll be quick and get on at school and college, and then you can take her to live with you, perhaps in another big house in London, and then we can see each other every day.'

'I'm not going to school and college. At least not if you will let me stay where I am, mother,' said Wilfrid. 'I want Gerard to go, and I will stay and be Mr White's errand-boy, or telegraph-boy, whatever you like to call it. And, by the bye,' and he felt in his pocket for the coins, 'here are my wages for this week, and I'm to have seven shillings for the future—that is, if you'll let me stop, mother.'

Mrs Clifford took the six shillings he handed her, and looked at them with glistening eyes. 'I'm proud of this money, Wilfrid,' she was beginning, when Connie interrupted her.

'Oh, Wilfie! you are not going to be an errand-boy?' she cried. 'I can't bear to think you are that! How can I be happy in London if I think you are carrying parcels and telegrams about just like any common boy! Oh, mother, don't let him be so foolish!'

Mrs Clifford looked troubled. 'Connie, dear,' she said, 'you scarcely understand.'

'I do understand,' said Connie; 'I know I shall be ashamed for our cousins to know my brother is that.'

'I am afraid my little girl is not looking at the matter as she ought,' said Mrs Clifford reprovingly.

And Wilfrid exclaimed hotly: 'If that's all,

Connie; if you're going to be ashamed of me and my work, I'll take care you never hear anything about it.'

'But you don't know how proud they all are,' sobbed Connie. 'You haven't stayed there as I have.'

'But, my dear, if they *are* proud, that is no reason why you should be,' said Mrs Clifford. 'And you may be sure that nothing but *necessity* would cause me to allow Wilfrid to sacrifice his prospects! If only I could get some pupils, I might be teaching drawing or music; but I've made inquiries, and there are not any pupils to be had here,' and she sighed.

'I am going to work for you, mother,' said Wilfrid, 'and dear little Gerard's going to have a chance of having the education of a gentleman.'

'Oh dear!' said Connie, with a deep sigh, 'how unhappy I shall be when I think about you!'

Wilfrid grew very red, and now he spoke very fast. 'Oh yes,' he said, 'you'll be like the girl in the story who trod upon the loaf. Don't you remember, she'd been adopted by a rich lady, and she grew ashamed of her poor mother and brothers and sisters, and so she never went near them. But one day the lady gave her a loaf of fine white bread to take to her poor mother; so she dressed herself in her finest clothes and set off, carrying the loaf;

but, by-and-by, she came to a very muddy place, and she was afraid she would soil her pretty shoes, so she put the loaf down in the mud and stepped upon it! There! that's just what you'll do, Connie!' Then his eye caught his mother's grieved look, and he felt suddenly ashamed of his wild burst of passion.

'Oh, Wilfrid,' she said, in distressed tones, 'take care. Sometimes the first are last and the last first,' and she took Connie's hand, saying kindly, 'I'm sure Connie wouldn't have said such a thing of you. And for my part I don't think she will ever be ashamed of us.'

The little girl threw her arms round her neck and kissed her.

'You know I never shall,' she said. 'And I won't be a bit proud, and Wilfrid's horrid, horrid!'

Mrs Clifford released herself from the clinging arms.

'Don't call him names,' she said. 'I'm sure he's very sorry.'

'Yes, I am very,' said Wilfrid, in a choked voice. 'And I beg your pardon, Connie; and if you drive by me some day with your rich friends when I'm carrying a parcel for some one, I hope I shall take my cap off like a gentleman.'

Connie burst out laughing. 'Mind you do,' she

said, 'or I shan't like to introduce my rich friends, as you call them, to you.'

Well, after that they bantered each other for a little while quite merrily; and then Sarah removed the supper tray, and they went and sat once more by the window, looking out into the moonlight, and talking in hushed low voices. And at last they had all agreed that Gerard, and not Wilfrid, should be the one to go to school at their aunt's expense; and Wilfrid promised his mother that he would study as hard as he possibly could at home. If he took his books with him to the shop, he said, he was sure he could learn a good deal, for though very busy at times, there was many a half-hour when no customer came in, and there was no work at all for him to do. And when it was all settled, he asked his mother if he might be the one to tell Gerard about it.

The next day, therefore, during his dinner-hour—his mother had stipulated he should have an hour—he called Gerard to follow him, as soon as their meal was over, and led the way to a tiny arbour in the garden.

'Jerry,' he said, when they were seated under the nodding honeysuckles, 'something very good for you is going to happen.'

'Yes?' said the little boy opening his blue eyes wide; 'what is it, Wilfie?'

'You know how I have liked school, Jerry, and how fond I am of Dr and Mrs Metcalf. Yes; well, you are going there now.'

'Am I?' asked the child, rather timidly; 'am I really going back with you?'

'Don't you want to go?'

'Oh yes, Wilfie; I always wanted to go with you; only I wish mother and Connie and Tottie could come too,' and the little fellow winked hard to keep the tears back.

'But girls and mothers can't go to boys' schools,' said Wilfrid. 'I was just your age when I first went —no, I 'm wrong, I was a little younger.'

'And did you like it?'

Wilfrid could not truthfully say he enjoyed it at first; but he said, 'I got to like it, after a while, and so will you too. You 'll have to be brave, Gerard, and good, then you will get on quite well. You must never, never tell tales of the boys, and you must never do a mean thing—mind that, Gerard'—emphatically—'and if any one ever praises you for doing something, or *thinking* of something you haven't done or thought of, you must be quick and give the credit to the person it belongs to.' Wilfrid paused and looked meaningly at his little brother. Very tender was the love between them, and most anxious was the elder that the younger should possess all noble qualities.

The child turned very red, and hung his head. 'Wilfie,' he said, with a little sob, 'it was only *just once.* I 'm not like you ; mother doesn't often praise me ; and when she said I was thoughtful that day, oh, I *couldn't* say it was you.'

'Well,' said Wilfrid, 'you mustn't do that sort of thing again, you know, its *mean'*—with disgusted emphasis—'and I want you to try to be like the knights in the old times. I 've told you about them sometimes, haven't I, Jerry ; and I'm always trying to be like them myself—I began first before I was as old as you. And I 've just been reading a story in a book mother gave me last night which I 'll tell you now if you like !'

'Yes, please, Wilfie.' Gerard dearly loved a story, and felt relieved that Wilfrid had got off a painful subject.

'It was at the battle of Crécy,' began Wilfrid, 'that Edward, the Black Prince, fought for his knightly spurs.—Well, what is it ?'

'Was he really black ?'

'No, child, no ; it was his armour that was black, and so he was called the Black Prince. Oh, where was I ?'

'He was fighting for his spurs,' said Gerard ; 'go on, please.'

'Yes, and you understand what that means, of course : spurs were the badge of knighthood ; to win

spurs meant to become a knight. When we say nowadays you must "win your spurs," we mean you must become very distinguished, nobly distinguished. But, where was I?—oh, his father, King Edward III., was watching from a hillside, and he saw his brave boy—the Black Prince was only sixteen—surrounded by enemies. The prince's friends sent to the king for help, telling him what danger the prince was in. But the king only said, "Is he dead, or overthrown, or so wounded that he cannot continue to fight?" And when he was told that his son still lived, he said, "Go back to him and those who sent you, and tell them, whatever happens, to seek no aid from me so long as my son be in life. Say I command them to let the boy win his spurs well; for, please God, the day shall be his and the honour shall rest with him." Now, Jerry, you're going to school, and you've got to win your spurs all by yourself without any of us to help you, but you *must win them, Jerry—you must win them.*'

Perhaps Gerard did not quite understand all his brother's meaning, but he was very much impressed by the story and by Wilfrid's manner of telling it. Now, however, a great fear came to him. Wilfrid spoke as if he were not going to school too, and how could Gerard win his spurs if there was no one he knew, even on a hillside, to watch him.

'Aren't you going too, Wilfie?' he asked.

'I wish I could, Jerry,' was the wistful rejoinder. Then, as the little boy burst into tears, Wilfrid comforted him as well as he could, until his hour was over and he had to hurry back to the shop.

And then Mrs Clifford came out to Gerard and told him the story of Dieudonné, and also—which he liked still more—the story of how Wilfrid had tried to be like Dieudonné when he was a little boy younger than Gerard.

CHAPTER V.

GENERAL GREY.

The tempter's arrows that rarely fail,
Had found the joints of his spiritual mail;
And men took note of his gloomy air,
The shame in his eye, the halt in his prayer,
The signs of a battle lost within,
The pain of a soul in the coils of sin.

. . . . . .

And the people looked askance on him
As he walked among them sullen and grim,
Ill at ease, and bitter of word,
And prompt of quarrel with hand or sword.

LONGFELLOW'S *John Underhill.*

'GOOD-BYE, Gerard! Give my love to Dr and Mrs Metcalf. Tell the boys I'd like to be playing cricket with them again.' Then in a whisper, 'Go and win your spurs.' And then Wilfrid saw poor Gerard, who was trying not to cry, given over into the care of the guard, and ran back to his work very quickly, lest Mr White should think he had taken more than the half-hour he had begged for, that he might go with his mother to see his brother off by

train for the north. The little fellow was going direct to Wakefield, as it was the day on which Dr Metcalf's school reopened, but Connie had gone to London the day before. Very tearful had the poor girl been just at the last, and earnestly had she begged her mother to write often, and pleaded that she might spend the holidays sometimes with her. 'Poor Connie,' thought Wilfrid now, 'I wish I hadn't been so hard on her many a time! She 's *very feeling*, is Connie.' And he resolved to write her a penitent little note, to let her know that he did not think badly of her, after all, but blamed himself very much.

When he returned home that evening, he found his mother had gone to bed with a bad headache; and so, after running up-stairs to see if she wanted anything, he had supper by himself, and felt, of course, rather lonely, but afterwards, as it was still early, began to find much consolation in reading his *History of Chivalry;* and presently fetched his little desk down-stairs and began to copy such extracts as he thought would make a worthy addition to his 'Rules of Knighthood.' And first he wrote down the Bishop of Valenciennes' counsel to the young Count of Ostrevant: 'He who seeks to be a knight should have great qualities. He must be of noble birth.' 'Of course *I* am,' said Wilfrid to himself, 'for who could be nobler than my father and my

mother? Yes, that 's all right,' and he nodded as he went on writing. 'Liberal in gifts'—'If that means in giving away things,' thought the boy, not quite understanding, 'I 'm afraid I 've been too liberal;' for he remembered the loaf of bread he had given Molly Smith. 'High in courage,' he went on writing, 'strong in danger, secret in council, patient in difficulties, powerful against enemies, prudent in deeds. He must also swear to observe the following rules: To undertake nothing without having heard mass fasting.' Wilfrid broke off and bit his pen. 'I suppose they were all Roman Catholics in those days,' he thought. 'No doubt it would mean now, without going to worship in God's house;' so he made a note in brackets [*N.B.*—'Without going to worship in God's house']. Then he went on writing, 'To spare neither his blood nor his life in defence of the Catholic faith; to give aid to all widows and orphans; to undertake no war without just cause; to favour no injustice, but to protect the innocent and oppressed; to be humble in all things; to seek the welfare of those placed under him; never to violate the rights of his sovereign, and to live irreprehensibly before God and man.'

'Well, I think if a man could do all that, he 'd be the best knight that ever lived!' said Wilfrid to himself. Then he wrote down the words that were said when knighthood was conferred: 'In the name

of God, St Michael, and St George, I make thee knight; be loyal, bold, and true.'

He turned over the pages restlessly, and then wrote: 'The young knight went journeys into foreign countries, and studied carefully the demeanour of every celebrated champion he met, and strove to glean the excellencies of each. Thus he learned courtesy and grace, and thus he learned all the famous exploits of the day which, borne from court to court by these chivalrous travellers, spread the fame of great deeds from one end of the world to the other.'

'I suppose it will do if, when I take out my telegrams and messages, I am always on the look-out for what is best in other people, and try to copy that,' said Wilfrid to himself; 'and if I always try to spread about the news of every noble deed I come across.'

He was tired of writing, but still he lingered over the book which had such a charm for him. And by-and-by he was reading: 'One of the most curious institutions of chivalry was that which required a knight, on his return from any expedition, to give a full and minute account to the heralds, or officers of arms, of all his adventures during his absence, without reserve or concealment: telling as well his reverses and discomfitures, as his honours and success. To do this, he was

bound by oath; and the detail thus given was registered by the herald, who by such relations learned to know and estimate the worth and prowess of each individual knight. It served also to excite other adventurers to great deeds in imitation of those who acquired fame and honour; and it afforded matter of consolation to the unfortunate, who in those registers must ever have met with mishaps to equal or surpass his own.'

'What fun it would be to tell all one's exploits to the heralds, or officers of arms,' thought Wilfrid; 'but it's no use writing that down, for I haven't any comrades of that kind.'

'Master Wilfrid, do go to bed,' said Sarah, coming in. 'Why, it's a quarter to ten!'

'Oh yes, Sarah, I'm going,' replied Wilfrid, gathering up his papers. 'I'd some rather important business to do. Good-night!'

'Well I never!' said Sarah, thinking he looked important, whether the business was so or not.

Wilfrid pinned up what he had written beside his other rules, and in a few minutes was fast asleep, and dreaming that he was being knighted by an old man with a long gray beard, who struck him three times on his shoulder with a sword, and said, 'I make thee knight; be loyal, true, and brave.'

The next day the boy began in good earnest to 'study champions' as he called it, in the fashion of

the old knights, trying to find in all the principal people he met, 'the excellencies of each.' And first he took notice of his master's real kindness of heart; for, though strict about payments when the villagers owed him money, and stern about the exact amount of work which those in his employ should do, Mr White was very generous, when it seemed right to him to give either help or money, and he was very sympathising and neighbourly to those in trouble.

It happened that in the course of the morning Wilfrid had to take a telegram to the old Hall, or Hermitage as it was often called, partly because its occupant (not owner) lived the life of a recluse. Wilfrid had heard of General Grey, and knew that he was considered morose and even miserly. He never went to church, never visited his neighbours, kept only a small establishment, and was very rarely seen by any one. Still, the knowledge that he had been in the army, had served with distinction in Egypt, and was a general, fired the boy's imagination; and he said to himself, as he took the telegram, 'If I could only see him, he would be a champion, I'm sure, and I would try to find out some excellence in him.'

Now Wilfrid knew the contents of the telegram, because he had written it out, and it was an appeal for help from one who styled himself the general's

old servant. How would the 'hermit,' as he was so often called in the village, answer the appeal? Surely that would be a test to show what he was.

As Wilfrid entered the Hall grounds, he noticed how very much overgrown everything was; the trees and shrubs spread their branches over the mossy and grass-grown paths, the carriage-drive was a green lane, the flowers were half wild; here and there, broken boughs, and in one or two places a fallen tree, lay across the way. It would have been impossible to drive to the house.

Suddenly a deep growl made the boy stand still, and the next instant a great St Bernard's dog came from behind a thick laurel and stood before him in the path, with bristling hair and angry mien. Wilfrid was not afraid of dogs, but this was a very formidable one, and he saw it was determined that he should not pass on to the house. He stood looking at it as calmly as he could, for that he knew was the best plan to pursue, but still the dog growled and seemed ready to spring at him. Then, to Wilfrid's great relief, a tall and stately man, with iron-gray hair and a fine handsome face, came slowly round a bend in the drive, and though his eyes were fixed upon a book he was reading, and he did not appear to see them at all, he was evidently the dog's master, for it looked round to him as if for instructions.

'Will you call your dog, sir?' asked Wilfrid, lifting his cap.

But the man took no heed; he walked quietly on, passing close by, without lifting his eyes from his book.

Was he deaf, or was he deliberately unkind?

'Help, sir, help!' cried poor Wilfrid, as the dog sprang on him and knocked him down.

'Papa! Papa!' cried a shrill boy's voice at that instant, and the next moment the same voice shouted, 'Roger, Roger—here, here—come off, sir, come off! Down, Roger, down!' and a boy about Wilfrid's own age came bounding up and thrust the great dog aside.

Wilfrid got up slowly; he was very pale now, and the shock had made him tremble.

'Are you hurt?' asked the boy.

'No, no; but what a *very cruel* man he is,' said Wilfrid, looking after the figure which was now almost out of sight.

'He wouldn't hear you,' said the boy; 'you must not think he is cruel. Oh, he is anything but that.'

'But he passed close by. He must be very deaf.'

'No, it is not that. He is no more deaf than we are; he is absorbed in his book. He has such a power of concentrating his thoughts, that he never knows what goes on when he is studying.'

'I shan't like to come here again,' said Wilfrid, looking at the dog, which was quiet enough now.

'Why did you come?' Then looking at the yellow envelope in his hand, 'Oh! have you brought a telegram?'

'Yes, for the general.'

'Let us go after him with it. Can you walk? Are you all right?'

'Yes,' said Wilfrid, and so they went after the tall man, the dog following them both quite meekly.

When they reached General Grey, his son gently shook his arm, and he started and looked up from his book, as if he were much surprised.

'What is it, Norman?' he asked rather sharply.

'Well, papa, you didn't see this poor telegraph boy, and Roger knocked him down and stood over him till I came up to his help. And you passed close by, and he begged you to call the dog off.'

'You don't say so. Oh, my lad, I'm very grieved.' The voice which had been sharp was now tender and pitiful as a woman's, and the general laid his hand caressingly on Wilfrid's shoulder as he spoke.

'Oh, never mind, sir,' said Wilfrid. 'It doesn't matter, now I know you didn't do it on purpose. And I must get used to dogs, sir; I have to go to all sorts of places.'

The general seemed much struck with Wilfrid's

tone and appearance. He begged his pardon courteously for what had occurred, and then asked his name.

'Wilfrid Clifford.'

The general started. 'Where do you come from?' he asked. Wilfrid told him. Then the old soldier said, with strange earnestness, 'My boy, be true. Always be true. Never betray the trust of a friend. Never draw back from your word.'

They went on to the house, and Wilfrid thought it the grandest but gloomiest mansion he had ever seen. While he waited for an answer to the telegram, Norman brought him cake and milk; and acting on his advice, Wilfred gave some of the cake to Roger, in the hope that in future he might be friendly towards him.

Then the general came with his reply-telegram written out, which he asked Wilfrid to read over so that there might be no mistake about the words. It was to say that the general would send his old servant fifty pounds by the next post, and more if required. 'It can't be true that he's a miser,' thought the boy; then aloud, 'Oh no, thank you, sir,' for the general was putting a sovereign in his hand.

'Yes, my boy, I insist upon your taking it as a slight compensation for the shock you have had.'

Wilfrid thought of his mother, and accepted the

gift with such grace that the general was quite pleased, and more surprised than ever that he should be a telegraph-boy.

'There is a mystery about that boy,' he said to Norman, when he had gone, 'and the name'——

'Yes, papa, the name'——

'Makes me think'—— then the general broke off again, and, taking up his book, became deaf to his son's questionings.

When Wilfrid returned to the post-office, he gave his master the telegram and said, with a smile, 'Won't the poor old servant be glad? You see, the general's no miser.'

'Miser or not, he's an infidel,' said Mr White severely.

'An infidel! Oh no, surely not.'

'He is. Ask any one. All the village knows.'

Now Wilfred was greatly troubled to hear this. Ever since the general laid his hand on his shoulder and expressed such sorrow at the rough treatment he had met with, he had felt a great liking and admiration for him. But now, if he really was an infidel, as a knight he, Wilfrid, must have no dealings with him—no, he did not think he ought even to keep his sovereign.

CHAPTER VI.

ATTACKING THE INFIDEL.

Never turning back from less than four adversaries.
Rules of the Red Cross Knights.

GENERAL GREY and his son were lingering over their dessert that evening in the stately dining-room at the old Hall, when, all at once, there was a tap at one of the open French windows; and, looking up, they saw Wilfrid standing before them. He took off his cap, and the rays of the setting sun lighted up his golden hair, and revealed also the shabbiness of his every-day dress; but his broad linen collar was quite clean, and, though his face was flushed, his air was resolute and undaunted.

'May I come in, sir?' he asked, waving Roger aside, as the dog advanced slowly to meet him.

'Certainly,' said the general, more than ever surprised at his demeanour; 'take a seat. In what way can I serve you?'

'I can't sit down, thanks,' said Wilfrid very quickly, and colouring more than ever. 'I've come

to return your money,' and he almost threw the sovereign down before the general.

'What 's the meaning of this?' demanded the old soldier, very haughtily, whilst Norman stared at Wilfrid as if he thought he had taken leave of his senses.

'Well, it means that I am going to have no dealings with you!' cried Wilfrid. 'When I accepted that from you this morning I did not know what you were.'

'Indeed, sir, and what am I?' said the general quite angrily.

'An *infidel*,' answered Wilfrid, in a tone of abhorrence.

'So that 's what they call me, is it?' said the old soldier, rather bitterly. 'But what has that to do with you?'

Then Wilfrid took a step forward and said, with great solemnity, 'I am one who is pledged to serve the Master you have disowned; and one of the rules by which I am bound obliges me to *fight continually against the infidel*.'

'Ho! so you 're going to fight me, are you?'

'I am afraid I must,' said Wilfrid. 'But—but, as a gentleman, I can't, you know, I really can't attack a man in his own house.'

The general laughed. 'Well, come out of doors then,' he said, and stepped through the window,

leaving the sovereign lying on the table. He walked on until he had reached the middle of a large lawn, then he called to Wilfrid to come there.

'Take your jacket off,' he said, proceeding to throw off his coat, and speaking with feigned anger.

'Papa!' said Norman, in surprise. Then to Wilfrid, 'Oh, boy,' in a tone of distress, 'why are you so mad?'

Wilfrid stood with his jacket in one hand, looking at the thin figure of the general surmounted by his gray hair, and his heart relented a little.

'I think, sir,' he said, 'I think, perhaps you're *too old* for me to fight; you see knights—I mean I am bound to defend the weak. You don't look very strong.'

The general was amused. That was exactly what he was thinking about Wilfrid.

'Come on,' he said; 'don't be afraid.'

'You are mistaken,' said Wilfrid; 'I'm not afraid. No, and I shouldn't be if you and the dog and that boy,' pointing out Norman, 'were all to be against me; you know we are bound not to turn back from less than four adversaries. But'——

'But, what then?'

'I'm thinking of your gray hair,' said Wilfrid. 'My mother always tells me to respect gray hair.'

A curious look came into the general's eyes. He seemed unable to speak, so Wilfrid went on, 'Now,

if your son would be your champion, sir, and would fight me, I 'd fight him.'

'Dare you fight such a hero, Norman?' asked the old soldier, smiling.

'That I dare,' said Norman, who had already thrown off his jacket, and he sprang forward and began to wrestle with Wilfrid. He was a good wrestler, and was much stronger than Wilfrid, so he soon had him down, then kneeling over him, he cried, 'Do you surrender?'

'Surrender to infidels!' said Wilfrid faintly. 'No.'

'You 'd better. There 's Roger here ready to worry you for attacking his master.'

'I can't,' said Wilfrid. Then very faintly, 'Tell my mother'——

'Norman, get up. You 're crushing the life out of him. Poor little lad! such a brave boy too! There he has fainted,' and the general picked him up in his strong arms, carried him into the dining-room, and laid him on a couch.

When Wilfrid came to himself General Grey was bathing his brow with some scented water, and Norman was standing by ready to assist, and looking exceedingly anxious.

'There, my brave boy, you 'll do now,' said the general, as Wilfrid opened his eyes and looked intelligently at him.

'Let me get up, please.' Wilfrid sat up, with the

general's arm round his waist, then leaning his head against his shoulder, he said in a choked voice: 'I *do like you*, general. What a pity you 're an infidel!'

'I don't see why you should fight me for it,' said the general, in a low, almost pleading tone.

'You see,' said Wilfrid, 'I don't mind telling you, because I know you won't let it go any further; I 'm trying to be a knight, and they always had to fight against the infidels.'

'Well, it 's a pity,' said the general, 'for I like you, and should like to be your friend.'

'Is he an infidel too?' asked Wilfrid, looking at Norman.

'No, no,' said the general. 'Now I 'll leave you to him a little, while I go and order the carriage; you shan't walk home.'

He left the room before Wilfrid could remonstrate with him, and then Norman took his place by his side.

'I 'm glad you 're not an infidel,' said Wilfrid.

'I think I 'd rather be one out and out than a bad Christian,' said Norman bluntly.

'Who 's a bad Christian?' asked Wilfrid, struck by his tone.

'Well, you are. Christ said "Love your enemies." You made out father was your enemy, then you tried to show your hatred of him. Christ said if you got a blow on one cheek you were meekly to

turn the other to the man who hit you. How different that is from going up to a man and seeking a quarrel with him as you did. Yes, I think you 're a bad Christian, Wilfrid Clifford; and let me tell you this, it 's bad Christians that make infidels. My father wouldn't be an infidel now had not a bad Christian made him what he is.'

Poor Wilfrid was in great distress. 'But—but I was trying to be a knight,' he said. 'It was one of their rules to fight continually against the infidels.'

'A rule of the dark ages,' said Norman; then he added more gently, 'Yet there was one even then, in the thirteenth century—a knight of God—who knew enough of Christ's law to know there was "a more excellent way." Haven't you heard how Francis of Assisi, when all Christendom was fighting against the infidels, thought it would be better far to go and talk to them about Christ? No: well, but he did. He went unarmed, with a little band of followers, into the land where a golden price was set for the head of every European, and when they would have killed him, he said, "Take me to your king." And they took him as he bade them, and he preached to the infidel king.' Then as Wilfrid was silent, wondering over what he had just heard, Norman exclaimed, "Tell me, don't you think that is the best way? Don't you think that was Christ's way?'

'Yes,' said Wilfrid, in a low tone.

Then the general returned, saying the carriage was waiting at the door, and Wilfrid went up to him and begged his pardon for what must have appeared strange and rude in his behaviour.

'I made a mistake, sir,' he said; then, brushing his hand across his aching brow, he added humbly, 'I do make mistakes sometimes.'

'Now, I like boys to own when they are in the wrong,' said the general, looking pleased, 'and I must say I hope you'll visit us again when you're off duty. You may come in any time in the evening like this—only not to fight us, Wilfrid, not to fight us.'

'No, sir, no, general; never again,' said Wilfrid, shaking his head; then in a low tone, 'I'll cross that rule off about fighting infidels.'

'And take the sovereign, my boy; yes, you must take the sovereign.'

'Thank you, general; I am pleased to do so,' said Wilfrid, pocketing the money again with real delight.

Mrs Clifford was considerably surprised when Wilfrid alighted from the Hall carriage at their door, half an hour later, and she begged him to explain what he had been doing.

'Well, mother,' said Wilfrid, 'I think I'll tell you all about it. You see it says in my book the

knights used to give full particulars of their exploits to the heralds or officers of arms when they returned from their expeditions. Now, you 're not a herald '——

'Nor yet an officer of arms,' said his mother, smiling; 'but I 'll be your herald, while you tell me your doings, as I hope you will now every night. I 'm very lonely sometimes, Wilfie,' she added touchingly, 'while you 're away, and it would be a comfort to me to know every evening just what you have been doing.'

'Very well, mother,' said Wilfrid, 'you shall be my herald, and every night I will tell you my doings. 'And then he proceeded to give a minute account of all that had happened to him that day.

Mrs Clifford was of course very much astonished to hear of the danger he had been in with the dog at the Hall, and still more at his boldness and intrepidity in returning there to fight the infidel. She was deeply interested, too, in every word her boy told her about General Grey, asking many questions, and making him describe his appearance again and again.

'His son—Norman, do you call him?—must be a noble boy,' she said at last. 'I am very glad for you to have such a friend.'

'Yes, and he was quite right—wasn't he, mother? —in saying it was wrong to fight the infidels?'

'Yes. We must try to follow Christ's example. He hated sin, but loved the sinners, and spent His life in trying to save them.'

'I wish I could save General Grey. What do you think, mother? Norman said it was a bad Christian who had made him turn infidel.'

'Indeed!'

'Yes; and Norman said he was really so good and kind. I can't think how it is they think in the village he's miserly. Look, he gave me this sovereign. You must take it, mother; it is all for you.'

Mrs Clifford took the coin, and looked at it very curiously. Then she thanked her boy, and put it carefully away.

CHAPTER VII.

BROTHERS IN ARMS.

Not chance of birth or place has made us friends,

. . . . . .

But the endeavour for the self-same ends,
With the same hopes, and fears, and aspirations.

LONGFELLOW.

'MOTHER, mother, where are you?' cried Wilfrid, one fine morning towards the end of September, as he hastily re-entered his home about an hour after he had gone to his work.

'What is the matter?' asked Mrs Clifford, coming down-stairs to him. 'You look very happy.'

'I should think I am!' said Wilfrid, throwing up his cap and catching it again before he answered. 'Old White—well, Mr White's given me a whole holiday.'

'I'm very glad. But how was he able to spare you?'

'Oh! he wanted to do poor Molly Smith a kindness. I'd been telling him about them, and he said he'd give Tom a day's work, and I might

have a holiday. Tom 's a nice handy little chap—I beg your pardon, mother; I mean boy. And what do you think Mr White said? Why, he said he 'd better be training some one to do my work, for he didn't suppose he 'd have me long.'

'I hope he doesn't think you 're dissatisfied?'

'No, mother. But to tell the truth, he said I was fit for something better. He was telling the vicar about me the other day, and the vicar said something about trying to get me into a clergy orphan school. You know the vicar saw my Cæsar on the counter—I 'd just laid it down for a moment—and he began to ask Mr White if he sold Latin books now. Then it all came out.'

'Well, Wilfie, I too think you may not have to be long at Mr White's. But in the meantime try to do your work well, and let us make the most of the time we have together.'

'Yes, mother; but oh, mother, I hope you won't mind; I did want to spend the whole long day with you, but'——

'But what, dear?' as he hesitated. Mrs Clifford felt a natural wish to have her boy's company all the day, for she saw very little of him now except on Sundays; but she was much too unselfish to want to detain him if he wished to go elsewhere.

'You see, mother dear, I met Norman Grey,

and he asked me why I was so happy; so I told him, and he made me promise to spend the day with him, if you would consent. He is waiting outside now. And if you'll let me, I want to bring him in, and show him something in my room.'

'Your room! Wilfie, I'm afraid he'll think that's a poor little place. But certainly ask him in; and I shall be very pleased for you to spend the day with him.'

'Oh, thank you, mother.' And then Wilfrid ran outside and found his friend looking very shy, and brought him in in triumph.

Mrs Clifford shook hands with the boy, and expressed great pleasure at seeing him. 'You and your father have been so kind to Wilfrid,' she said; 'he has told me all about it.'

'I'm afraid he got a very warm reception at our place,' said Norman. He was an interesting-looking boy, not handsome; but his dark face was lighted up with intelligence, and his figure was well proportioned and strong. He was a year older than Wilfrid, and nearly half a head taller. He did lessons at home with his father, he said; his father was very clever, and a first-class Greek scholar. 'He is going to teach me till I go to Oxford,' he said, 'and I shouldn't like any other master; only sometimes I wish I had some companions of my own age. However, now I've you, Wilfrid, that

will do,' and he smiled at Wilfrid, and seemed well pleased to have him for a friend.

Then Wilfrid took his visitor upstairs to his little attic, and there he showed him the 'Rules of Knighthood'—the one about fighting the infidels was crossed out with a black line—and they sat side by side on his little bed; for he had no chairs in his room, but only a three-legged stool; and Wilfrid told Norman all about his ambition to be like the best knight that ever lived. And Norman thought it a capital idea, and especially approved of the clause in the rules which said the fame of every knight was to be spoken by others, 'not tied to his name by a title.'

And then Wilfrid got his *History of Chivalry*, and disclosed to Norman the dearest wish of his heart.

'Read that,' he said, turning to a certain page, 'and then think if *you* couldn't be my brother in arms?'

So Norman read:

'One of the most extraordinary customs of chivalry, and also one of the most interesting, was the adoption of a brother in arms. . . . . Esteem and long companionship were the first principles of this curious sort of alliance, which bound one knight to another by ties more strict than those of blood itself.

'It is true the brotherhood in arms was often contracted but for a time, or under certain circumstances, which once passed by, the engagement was

at an end; but far oftener it was a bond for life, uniting interests and feelings, and dividing dangers and successes. The brothers in arms met all perils together, undertook all adventures in company, shared in the advantage of every happy enterprise, and partook of the pain or loss of every misfortune. If the one was attacked in body, in honour, or in estate, the other sprang forward to defend him. Their wealth and even their thoughts were in common; so that the news which the one received, or the design that he formed, he was bound to communicate to the other without reserve. Even if the one underlay a wager of battle against any other knight, and was cut off by death before he could discharge himself thereof, his brother in arms was bound to appear in the lists, in defence of his honour, on the day appointed.'

Norman looked up from the book into the clear blue eyes of Wilfrid, and read something there which made him hold out an eager hand.

'Wilfrid,' he cried, 'I 'm your man. We 'll be brothers, Wilfrid, brothers in arms.

'We will,' said Wilfrid, grasping the offered hand and shaking it eagerly.

'I 've longed so *often* for a brother!' said Norman.

'And I 've often longed for one of my own size too! You know I have a dear little brother Gerard, but he 's only eight.'

'Where is he?'

'Gone to school. He wants to be a knight, too, some day; and I've told him he's to win his spurs at school.'

'Look here,' said Norman, 'listen;' and he read aloud:

'Sometimes this fraternity of arms was contracted by a solemn deed; sometimes by a vow ratified by the communion and other ceremonies of the church. In many cases, however, the only form consisted in the mutual exchange of arms, which implied the same devotion to each other, and the same irrevocable engagement.

'I suppose we must make a solemn contract in some way like that,' said Wilfrid. We could make a promise, you know, but we're too young to take the communion.'

'We could exchange something,' said Norman.

'What arms have we?' asked Wilfrid.

Norman thought a few minutes; then he said, 'Don't you think your rules are your arms, Wilfrid?'

'Well, I think they're the only tangible weapon I have.'

'I've been thinking,' said Norman, 'though you've written them beautifully, Wilfrid, beautifully, it would be easier for you to read them on your wall if I were to type-write them for you.'

'Have you a type-writer?'

'Yes. A Remington. A beauty—its writing is quite as good as print. Then we could exchange copies. I 'll give you the type-written one and you 'll give me yours. I 'd rather have yours, Wilfrid, than any type-written one in the world, just because you 've written it.'

Well, Wilfrid thought that uncommonly nice of Norman, and he felt a great love spring up in his heart for the boy; but, boylike, he said nothing about it, but merely remarked, 'We shall have to put the bit about the brothers in arms at the end of our rules, that we may always remember what we 've promised.'

So they carried off Wilfrid's 'rules' and the *History of Chivalry* to the old Hall, and there, in a pleasant room Norman called his study, he showed his visitor his type-writer, and Wilfrid watched him copy the rules, and himself wrote out the paragraph about the brotherhood in arms. Then the two boys lunched together in the great dining-room, where Norman found a note from his father asking them both to dine with him at eight that evening, and saying he was going out till then.

'It's only one now. We shall be hungry before eight,' said Norman. 'What do you think if we have a picnic, cocoa and cake and things, in the cave in the great Brentwood plantation, about a mile from here?'

Wilfrid's eyes sparkled. 'Is there really a cave?' he said. 'Oh, what fun!'

'Haven't you seen it?' cried Norman; 'why, it's the most romantic spot in the world. We'll take some matches and light a fire, and I've got a little kettle there I hid in a hole in the wall; so, if nobody's stolen it, we can boil some water and make our cocoa ourselves.'

'Yes,' said Wilfrid, 'and afterwards we'll have our ceremony of institution, or whatever we call our becoming brothers in arms.'

'Yes,' said Norman, 'it's quite the proper thing to eat together first.—Here, Simpson,' he called to the butler, 'do be awfully kind, and pack us up some cocoa and sugar and good things for tea; then we'll have a picnic, and you won't be bothered with us again till dinner-time.'

'But where are you going?' Master Norman.

The boy told him, and then Simpson, with the help of one of the maids, showed the most obliging alacrity in carrying out his young master's orders, so that within half an hour Norman and Wilfrid were able to set off, each laden with a neat little knapsack containing provisions. They also carried with them their precious 'Rules of Knighthood,' and as light hearts as it was possible for two happy boys to possess.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE CAVE.

Whene'er a noble deed is wrought,
Whene'er is spoken a noble thought,
Our hearts, in glad surprise,
To higher levels rise.
Honour to those whose words or deeds
Thus help us in our daily needs,
And by their overflow
Raise us from what is low!

LONGFELLOW.

THE boys were for the most part silent as they walked through the great Brentwood plantation of noble elms, wide-spreading sycamores, and sturdy oak-trees. It was very still there and a little gloomy, but they did not notice that, for their hearts were full of a wonderful new joy; they had each found a brother; henceforward their thoughts, wishes, and aims were to be common property. Each was to share with the other the best of everything he possessed. Already it was a joy to Norman to think that now he could give poor Wilfrid money and many other things he needed, and he would be

unable to refuse them ; whilst Wilfrid was so simple a boy, and so unmindful of himself, that he never considered that, by making a contract of this kind with one in Norman's position, he was insuring for himself a share of the other's wealth. No, strange as it may seem, his thoughts were full of very different things. He was already planning all sorts of valiant doings that he and Norman could undertake together. There was a poor donkey in the village that had a very hard life because its owner, a working-man, continually beat and kicked it; that donkey had to be rescued. There were other animals, too—a dog, a cat, and even some rabbits —which must be looked after. And then was there not poor Molly Smith's poverty-stricken family? Could not the brothers in arms attack Mike—of course in a friendly way, not like fighting the infidel —and get him to work for his poor relations? Then there were some lads who very much annoyed the vicar by throwing mud and even small stones at the schoolroom windows during the time when he held a Bible class there on certain week nights. 'We 'll watch outside, and fight them off,' thought Wilfrid. And all these things he meant to tell Norman when once they had become brothers in arms.

And now they were walking over rough stony ground, and among jagged rocks overgrown with the

pretty small-leaved wild ivy, and covered with moss and lichens.

'There's the cave!' said Norman, at last, pointing to a narrow opening between two rocks.

'That dark hole! Oh,' said Wilfrid, in delight, 'let's go in.'

The boys scrambled up to the hole, and passed through it into a gloomy cavern which had evidently been hollowed out of the rocks many long years before. It was about the size of an ordinary sitting-room, and about eight feet in height. A slab of stone on the ground at one side, with a hole in the roof above it, had evidently been used for a fire-place, for it was blackened and burnt in places. There was no other opening but the hole which did duty for a doorway, and so the light was necessarily very dim and uncertain. But the boys were charmed, of course, with all this; the sense of mystery, the darkness, the secrecy, delighted them.

'There's a stone here will do for a table. Let's put our provisions on it, and go out and get some firewood,' said Norman.

'Yes,' said Wilfrid, 'and then we'll fill the kettle. I can do that. Oh, but where is the kettle, Norman?'

'I'll show you.'

Norman removed a stone from a hole in one dark corner of the cave, and pulled out a little tin kettle,

with an exclamation of delight. 'Why, nobody's stolen it!' he said. 'Awfully good of them, I'm sure!'

Wilfrid laughed. 'I never heard *nobody* called good before!' he said. 'I always thought nobody had no qualities!'

'This is nobody's cave, you know,' laughed Norman.

And then they were very merry, fetching sticks, lighting the fire, finding a stream, filling the kettle, spreading the table—they hadn't a cloth—mixing the cocoa, and finally having their tea.

'Well, this is fun!' said Wilfrid again and again.

'I never had such a grand time,' said Norman. 'We'll often come here, Wilfrid.'

'Yes, we will,' said the other; then his tone changed, and he said, 'Oh dear! I'd forgotten all about the shop! Actually, Norman, I forgot I was an errand-boy!'

'Oh, you'll not be that long,' said Norman, oracularly.

'So Mr White said this morning,' said Wilfrid, getting up to poke the fire with his boot; 'but I see no other prospect.'

Norman did not answer. He was putting the drinking-cups, &c., back in his knapsack; but a smile played about his mouth, and when he looked up at Wilfrid his eyes were sparkling.

'Now, Wilfrid,' he said at last, 'let us transact our business. Here are the type-written rules for you, and where are mine?'

'Here,' said Wilfrid, producing them. 'What shall we say?'

'Let us turn the words we have copied from the book into a promise. See, I will fix up your copy so that we can both say it together.'

They accordingly did so, Norman's louder tones coming first, and Wilfrid's following.

'We promise,' said they both, 'to meet all perils together, to undertake all adventures in company, to share in the advantage of every happy enterprise, and partake together of the pain or loss of every misfortune.' Then each looking at the other, they went on: 'If you are attacked in body, in honour, or in estate, I will spring forward to defend you. Our wealth and even our thoughts shall be in common, so that what news I receive, or what design I form, I shall be obliged to communicate it to you without reserve.'

'We won't say the last clause, as we don't fight duels in these days,' said Norman. 'Now, let's transfer the papers while we say, "And in token thereof"'——

'And in token thereof,' they both said, 'we do each give the other our arms—that is, a copy of our Rules.'

The boys having handed the papers to each other, shook hands solemnly. Then they looked up in surprise, for the door was darkened by the figure of a man.

'Papa!' cried Norman in amazement.

General Grey entered the cave and shook hands with Wilfrid.

'I'm afraid I've overheard a bit,' he said, with a strange twinkle in his eye. 'But you'll forgive me, I know. I was attracted by the smoke, and when I heard what was going on, I didn't like to interrupt. Don't you think you might have asked *me* to be your brother in arms, Wilfrid? I feel quite hurt to be left out in the cold.'

'Oh, sir, you're much too big, and—and too great a man, sir, to be brother in arms of such a young boy as I am. Oh, sir, I think you can't be serious.'

'Well, well, can you make me a cup of cocoa?'

'That we can,' replied Norman. 'It's just as well I hadn't emptied the kettle. And we've got some cake left too. Sit down, papa. Oh, you musn't sit on the table!'

'You can't expect me to sit on those things!' said the general, looking at the low stones the boys had used for seats; 'and it's only mockery to invite me to sit down unless there's a seat provided, and of course you didn't mean that.' So

he sat down on the table, much to the boy's amusement.

They made him some cocoa and gave him some cake with great glee; then Norman said, 'Papa, I wish you would tell us a good story about a knight; I 'm sure you must know lots, and we 're'——

'Thirsting for knowledge, are you?' asked the general, laughing. 'Well, I think, since you 've treated me so well, I ought to try and oblige you. Shall I tell you the story of Bayard? You know Whittier says,

> Oh, for a knight like Bayard,
> Without reproach or fear!'

'Oh, do tell us about him,' said Wilfrid, 'my chivalry book just mentions him.'

'But I 'm afraid I can't tell you here,' said the general; 'the smoke—if you 'll excuse my mentioning it—the smoke *does* get into my throat *so*. I 'll tell you it after dinner to-night.'

Accordingly, after dinner that evening, the general said, 'Now, I 'll tell you the story of Bayard, or more properly Bayart, who was called the knight *without fear and without reproach.* He belonged to the Terrails, one of the most ancient families in Dauphiné, and was born in the castle of Bayard in 1476. He was one of the most spotless characters of the Middle Ages. Educated under the eye of his uncle, the Bishop of Grenoble, he learned to be

simple and modest, a true friend and tender lover; pious, kind-hearted, and magnanimous. When only thirteen he was made a page of the Duke of Savoy; and Charles VIII. was so pleased with the skill with which he managed his horse that he begged him of the duke and gave him to the care of a noble Count something or other. At eighteen he distinguished himself in the battle of Fornovo, where he took a standard. Later, like Horatius Cocles, he defended a bridge over the Garigliano singly against the Spaniards, and saved the French army by checking the advance of the victorious enemy. For this exploit he received as a coat of arms a porcupine, with the motto *Vires aguimis unus habet.*

'Everywhere Bayard refused bribes, defended the defenceless, and fought as a gallant knight and true. In the retreat from Pavia, he was wounded and was carried to Grenoble, where his life was in danger. Hear what this brave knight said at such a crisis: "I grieve not for death; but to die on my bed like a woman."

'There's a story told about him, which I'm sure you will like. It was this: Henry VIII. of England, in alliance with Ferdinand and Maximilian, threatened Picardy in 1513, and besieged Therouenne. The French army disgracefully took to flight, but, in spite of that, Bayard made an ineffectual resistance to the enemy; then, overpowered by superior

numbers, his troop was on the point of laying down their arms, when Bayard saw an English officer at some distance from him, and immediately galloped towards him, presented his sword to his breast and cried, "Yield or die!" The Englishman surrendered his sword, upon which Bayard immediately gave him his own, saying, "I am Bayard, and your captive, as you are mine." The emperor, and the king of England were pleased with the ingenuity and boldness of this action, and decided that Bayard needed no ransom, and that both captives were released from their parole. But it would take too long to tell you all the brilliant exploits achieved by this brave man. Francis I. was knighted with his sword. At last Bayard was saluted in Paris as the saviour of his country, the king bestowed on him the order of St Michael, and a company of one hundred men, which he was to command in his own name. Soon afterwards Genoa revolted from France, and Bayard's presence reduced it to obedience. But, shortly after, fortune changed, and the French troops were expelled from their conquest. When they were in retreat, the safety of the army was committed to Bayard. He, always the last in retreat, was vigorously attacking a superior force of the enemy, when a stone from an arquebus struck his right side and shattered his backbone.

'The hero fell, crying out "Jesu, my God, I 'm a dead man!"

'They hurried up to him.

'"Place me under yon tree," he said, "that I may see the enemy."

'He kissed the cross on his sword, spoke kindly words to his servants and friends, bade farewell to his king and country, and died surrounded by friends and enemies, who *all* shed tears of grief and admiration.'

'Thank you, sir,' cried Wilfrid. 'I often wanted to know about Bayard.'

'And so did I,' said Norman, 'I am obliged to you, papa.—Must you go, Wilfrid?'

Wilfrid had risen.

'Yes,' he said reluctantly, 'I shan't be up in time to go to my work in the morning unless I hurry home now. Good-night, sir, and thank you very much for your kindness. Good-night, Norman, my brother'—the last two words in a low tone.

Norman went out with him to the door, then he returned to his father.

'Do you know what you have done, Norman?' asked the general.

'No.'

'Well, you 've promised to share all that gallant little fellow's work, or at least enterprises, which

means, of course, that you are going to be errand-boy to Mr White'——

'Papa!' exclaimed Norman, 'how can I? You wouldn't let me;' then, looking more closely at his father's face, he cried, 'I 'll go in a minute if you will.'

'No, no, it is out of the question. But didn't you both promise to share what wealth you had?'

'Yes.'

'Well, how much pocket-money do I let you have a week?'

'Five shillings.'

'How would it be if you let Wilfrid have it instead of his wages, and then he could come here every day and share your lessons!'

'Oh, papa how delightful! But would you teach him?'

'Yes. Would you be willing to give him your money?'

'Yes, yes.'

'Why?'

'Because I love him. But, papa, why will *you?*'

'Because I love him too.'

And after Norman had gone to bed in a state of pleased excitement, the general paced up and down the long dining-room, whilst again and again his lips murmured, 'So like, so very like!' and at last, as a deep sigh escaped from him, he said, 'If only I had not been so hard, so very hard.'

CHAPTER IX.

CONNIE'S SELF-CONQUEST.

Sensitive, swift to resent, but as swift in atoning for error.
The Spanish Student.

CONNIE was delighted to find, on arriving at her Aunt Merritt's, that she and her cousins Madge and Beatrice were not to go to school until the middle of the term, because Mr Merritt and his partner, Mr Gibson, had agreed to take their families on a driving-tour through the south of England. For this purpose the gentlemen hired a coach which they could drive with four-in-hand; and they ordered relays of horses to be ready for them at different places through which they would have to pass. Thus they were able to drive thirty or forty miles a day, and stop wherever they thought there was a beautiful place in which to pass the night. Connie enjoyed the novelty of this way of travelling immensely, and found her cousins, and Laura and Ernestine Gibson, very lively and entertaining.

The four girls generally sat together, and their merry laughter and droll remarks often much amused their elders.

Connie became quite excited when the tour led them through Surrey, and she found herself daily, hourly drawing nearer to her home.

'Shall we pass through Brentwood, aunt?' she asked. But Mrs Merritt's, 'It is not at all probable,' was anything but encouraging.

Mrs Merritt was proud; and, truth to say, did not think her sister, who had known the Gibsons when she was in better circumstances, would like them to see the humble cottage in which she now resided; and as for herself, she certainly did not want them to know her sister was so poor. Her husband, for his part, had entirely forgotten his poor sister-in-law's address, or he would certainly have made a point of calling to see her.

Now it happened that, on the morning after Wilfrid's holiday, his master said to him, almost as soon as he reached the shop: 'There's a large parcel of stationery there which Lady Millson, who lives at Waterton Park, two miles off on the Croydon Road, bought yesterday. I was so vexed I couldn't trust little Tom to take it so far; I was obliged to ask her ladyship if it would do in the morning, and she said it would, but she seemed surprised, and I do hope she won't be offended.'

'But why didn't she take it in her carriage?' asked Wilfrid, 'I suppose she came in one.'

'Do you think ladies like her will wait for their parcels?' said his master. 'No, my lad, you'll have to take it. So you'd better go with it at once.'

Wilfrid put the parcel on his shoulder and set off, but it was very heavy, and before he got halfway to Waterton Park he was sadly tired. However, he trudged on valiantly, trying to resist the desponding thoughts which would come. He had been so happy yesterday, and now he did not know when he would have another holiday, and his work was irksome to him, and he began to think what a very much easier time of it his brother in arms had. Perhaps he was just then sitting in his pleasant study, working at his books, or writing with his nice type-writer. Was he thinking of his poor brother in arms' hard fate? Would he be sorry if he knew how tired he, Wilfrid, was?

And Connie, was she having a happy time with their rich relations? She had spoken in her last letter of a pleasant driving-tour they were all going to make across the south of England. They would have started now. Well, he was glad she was having a pleasant time; and Gerard was all right—yes, Gerard wrote much more cheerful letters now; and he himself was content. 'Oh yes, I'm quite

content,' he thought; 'I'm trying to be a knight *in poverty and humility.* Ah, what's that?'

The sole of his boot had come unsewn—perhaps he had not done it any good with poking the fire in the cave with it—and it almost tripped him up as he walked. Something must be done, he thought; so, setting the parcel down by the side of the road, he searched in his pockets until he found a piece of string; and with that he tied his boot together as well as he could. His hands were naturally a good deal soiled by contact with his dusty boot, and presently he forgot about that, as he touched his hot face, or adjusted his cap when the heavy parcel went against it.

By-and-by he heard the sound of a horn, and now a coach-and-four came into sight and rapidly drew nearer. There were ladies with parasols, and gentlemen in tourists' dress, sitting on the coach and enjoying the lovely scenery. Would they notice the poor boy carrying his big parcel? How it would help him on his way if they would let him ride half a mile or so! They did notice him.

'Just look what a big parcel that boy is carrying! Poor wretch! How dusty and tired he looks! I do pity him,' said a girlish voice.

'No doubt he's used to it,' said an older woman.

'Poor fellow!' said another girl. 'He looks hot and tired.'

'Oh, I've lost my cap!' cried a boy; 'stop the horses, papa. Hi, you fellow, be quick; catch my cap for me, will you?'

Now Connie, on the front seat of the coach, had recognised Wilfrid at once. Oh, how dirty and untidy he looked, and what a monstrous parcel! Any one could see it was not his own. How could she say the boy they were all pitying, and for whom Dick Gibson was looking for a penny to reward him for catching his cap, was her brother? She felt quite angry with poor Wilfrid for getting in their way in such a plight. It was too bad of him!

But when he brought Dick's cap to the coach, which had now stopped, his eyes met Connie's, and an amazed look came into them, while he doffed his cap as courteously as ever, with a smile of infinite sweetness.

Then Connie was touched; she remembered their talk about such a meeting—she with her rich relations, he with his parcel—and in a moment she cried, much to her aunt's perturbation:

'Oh, Wilfrid, dear Wilfrid, is that you?' Then, turning to her uncle, she explained, 'Uncle, it's my brother. It's poor Wilfrid.'

'You don't say so! Not that boy, surely!' said her uncle, trying to restrain the restive horses, which wanted to dash on again.

'Well, really, Connie,' said Mrs Merritt coldly, 'you needn't treat us to a scene!'

'How's mother, Wilfie?' asked Connie, now almost in tears.

'All right, thank you, Con. We're getting on splendidly.'

'Does your mother live near here?' asked Mr Merritt, in a tone of surprise.

'About a mile and a half off,' answered the boy.

'I say, Wilfrid,' asked his uncle, 'have you to carry that parcel far?'

'About half a mile. It belongs to Lady Millson; she's been buying a lot of stationery at my master's shop.'

Poor Mrs Merritt! She turned quite pale. What would the Gibsons think?

What her husband thought was evident, for he said in a vexed tone, 'I wasn't aware you'd gone into a shop, my boy. That isn't the right place for a young gentleman.'

'But mother says being there needn't hinder my being a gentleman,' said Wilfrid stoutly; 'and it isn't so bad, after I've once got the shop swept out in a morning.'

'Are we to stay here all day listening to such talk as this?' demanded Mrs Merritt of her husband.

'No; you may get up, Wilfrid, and we'll take

you as far as we can. Here, give me the parcel; now climb up beside me. That's a clever boy. What's the matter with your foot?'

'Oh, it's only my boot,' explained Wilfrid; 'the sole's nearly off. Oh, thank you, uncle, this *is grand!*' with a sigh of content, as his uncle cracked his whip, a groom blew the horn, and the horses set off full trot.

'Connie,' said Wilfrid, in a low tone, while his uncle was speaking to Mr Gibson, 'you're a brick!'

Connie was pleased. Still she felt she ought to give her brother a sisterly expostulation.

'But you shouldn't be so dirty, Wilfie,' she said.

'Dirty, am I?' asked Wilfrid so innocently, that all the girls began to laugh; and Connie coloured with vexation.

'I should think so! Your face has finger-marks on it, and your hands are black, and your boot—oh, Wilfie, it does look so ugly with that string round it!'

'What a very disreputable little boy you are!' said Aunt Merritt severely.

This was almost more than 'the Little Knight' could bear. He had been trying so hard to do right, and these mere accidents seemed to make such a very bad impression.

'I think you'd better let me get down, uncle,' he said.

The horses were very tiresome at that moment, and Mr Merritt, supposing the boy had reached his destination, busied himself with holding them in while he got out.

'You must tell your mother we're sorry we can't go round to see her to-day,' he said hastily; and then, 'We must have you out of that shop. But what are *you* getting out for, Connie; sit still; you'll break your neck.'

'Sit still, Connie,' cried her aunt.

'No,' said the girl, with spirit, 'if Wilfie is too disreputable to ride beside you, aunt, why, I'm his sister, and—and I won't stay with you either.'

'Hey, what's that?' said Mr Merritt.

'Let me get out, please,' said Connie; 'I'm going with my brother.'

Then Mr Merritt understood what had been going on, and he made Wilfrid get in again. And Mrs Merritt, being appealed to, explained that she had only meant Wilfrid *looked* disreputable. And then everybody got good-humoured again, and had a very merry time until Waterton Court was reached.

'Good-bye, Connie,' said Wilfrid, as he took leave of them; then in a low tone, 'You've behaved splendidly. If you were only a boy, you'd make a knight.'

CHAPTER X.

RECONCILIATION.

Now let the merriest tales be told,
And let the sweetest songs be sung
That ever made the old heart young!

For now the lost has found a home:
And a lone hearth shall brighter burn,
As all the household joys return!

J. G. WHITTIER.

NEARLY all the night after Wilfrid Clifford's visit to the old Hall, General Grey found it impossible to sleep. Thoughts long banished from his mind returned with added force; memories of the far distant past stirred his softened heart and made place there for better feelings.

Now, he saw himself a child at his mother's knee, his hand clasped in a little brother's, while they learned together about their Father in heaven and His love for little children.

Then he was a man, standing by his brother's deathbed, and promising him in husky tones—because his heart was wrung with sorrow at losing

him—that he would adopt one of his two motherless little girls and be a father to her.

Again, he was living with Marion, the beautiful young girl, caring for her, watching over her with a father's love, ambitious for her too, and longing to see her the wife of a wealthy baronet who loved her.

Then, once more, the scene changed, and two young people stood before him pleading, with tears, for his consent to their marriage. One was his niece, whom he had brought up as his daughter, the other was a young clergyman. And he had harshly refused to listen to their prayer.

And again, he saw himself a man in great anger, an open letter lying before him, saying that his beloved niece, his darling Marion, had gone from him for ever. 'Your tyranny,' she had written, 'your tyranny shall not spoil my life. I know my father would have consented that I should marry Gerard Clifford. I shall leave your roof whether I marry him or not.'

'Ah,' said the general to himself, as he tossed on his sleepless pillow, 'if only I had not been so hard! If only I had forgiven her when she wrote afterwards imploring me to do so! And if only I had not let my anger towards her so fill my heart that I cared no longer for God, and thought no more about His law. Rage filled my heart, and hatred

against my poor dear niece; there was no room for other thoughts.'

But now the general grew calmer as he thought about the gentle boy, so full of sweet, chivalrous aspirations, who had visited his house that day and entered into such close alliance with his only son. Wilfrid Clifford, with a face so like the face of the child-niece he had first known and loved; a voice, too, so like Marion's that sometimes he could scarcely bear to hear him talk. He must be Marion's child. And if so, she was now a poor widow living in a cottage in the village. The general only rented the Hall: he had come there some half-dozen years before, thinking it would be a suitable place to settle down in as he had left the army. He did not know much about the other people in the village, but he thought from the boys' talk that the Cliffords must have come there very recently.

Well, he must forgive Marion now; nay more, he must ask her to forgive him for all his hardness of heart so long ago. For she was of age when she wished to choose her own husband, and he she chose was unexceptionable in character, and in every other respect most suitable.

'I did very wrong,' said the general to himself. 'I never admitted it before; but to-night I must say it.'

Now it was wonderful how much lighter General Grey's heart grew when once he had owned to himself that he had done wrong. He began to have a little hope. When the morning came he would go and see this Mrs Clifford. If she were not his niece, he could easily say that he had called to see her about Wilfrid's sharing Norman's lessons. But, if she proved to be his niece, ah, then—then——

'I 'll have her here,' said the old man joyously to himself; 'she and that fine boy of hers shall live with us and brighten up this dull old place.'

And with that he grew so happy that—it was almost daylight then—he fell into a doze, out of which he only awoke when the church clock was striking eight.

'Papa, papa,' said Norman impatiently, when he entered the breakfast room, 'which of us is to go and tell Wilfrid about the lessons, and—and the weekly sum of money he is to have?'

'I think I will,' said his father; 'I—I believe I 've a little business to settle with his mother first.'

'Business?' said Norman, inquiringly; but his father did not explain.

'How glad Wilfrid will be!' said the boy, after a while. 'I could scarcely bear to think of his going to work this morning all alone, when I, his brother in arms, ought to have been sharing it all with him!'

And on he talked, but his father said little or nothing; only he listened quite eagerly to every little thing Norman said about the Cliffords.

About ten o'clock General Grey stood rapping at Mrs Clifford's door.

'Is Mrs Clifford in?' The sonorous tones reached the widow in her little room and made her hasten to the tiny hall.

'Uncle!' she cried.

'Marion!' he said, with a great sob, holding out his arms, as she ran into them.

'You 'll come and live with me, Marion, my dear,' said her uncle, presently. 'I 'm getting an old man, and Norman is too young to be much of a companion, though he 's a good boy, a very good boy.'

'When did you marry, uncle?'

'Not long after you left me. I could not bear to live alone; but my wife died soon, and then I had only Norman. I could not send him to school; I teach him myself.'

'He is a noble boy!' said Mrs Clifford. 'Yes, thank you, uncle, I should like to come and stay with you, only there 's one thing; perhaps you won't like me to mention it'—and she looked troubled—'but still'——

'Speak out, my dear; don't be afraid.'

'Is it true, uncle, that you are an infidel? Oh, I hope it isn't true!'

'In one sense it is true. If we take the word infidel to mean "unfaithful to obligations" I am one. For I have been unfaithful to my heavenly Father, and have altogether failed in my duty to Him, but I believe in Him, and—yes, I believe in His love, for has He not given me back my Marion?'

There was a pause which neither cared to break, and then the general said very humbly—altogether, in his absence of mind, forgetting his niece's presence—'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.'

And Mrs Clifford knew she need not be afraid to take her children to her uncle's house.

CHAPTER XI.

TALKING TO MIKE SMITH.

The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung
To their first fault, and withered in their pride.
BROWNING'S *Paracelsus*.

'MOTHER,' cried Wilfrid, running into the room at dinner-time, 'guess who I've seen? Oh!'

For his mother was sitting on the couch, with her hand clasped in General Grey's, and such a look of satisfaction on her face as it had not worn for long, whilst Norman was on his knees on the hearthrug, playing with Tottie.

'Wilfrid,' said his mother, 'let me introduce you to my uncle.'

'Uncle?' exclaimed Wilfrid wonderingly.

'Yes, Wilfrid, you are my grand-nephew,' said General Grey.

'Is it true, mother?'

'Yes,' she said, smiling, 'it's quite true, and we're all going to live at the Hall with Uncle and Norman.'

'Hurrah!' cried the boys simultaneously, and

Norman jumped up to shake hands with his brother in arms. The latter had followed his father, after waiting more than an hour for him to return, thinking that he might be able to help to persuade Mrs Clifford to accept his pocket-money in lieu of Wilfrid's wages; and very much surprised and delighted he was to find what had been happening.

A short explanation was then made to Wilfrid, to the effect that his grand-uncle and mother had been estranged for years, but having met at last, everything was explained and set right as far as possible, and now General Grey was going to provide for his niece and her children.

Wilfrid was delighted to hear this; a mountain of care was lifted from his young shoulders; his mother would now be far removed from indigence. There would be no more fear of her having to do without a servant; she would be better off than she had been even when his father was alive. Then, at last, he thought of himself and asked:

'Shan't I have to be Mr White's errand-boy any more?'

'No, indeed,' said his uncle.

'I 'm very glad,' said Wilfrid. 'I hope I didn't grumble, but it wasn't always nice, you know. And shan't I be poor now?'

'Poor? No, no; not now.'

'Well,' said Wilfrid resignedly, 'it isn't quite so

nice as it sounds to be "in poverty and humility." It's very inconvenient to have no money sometimes.'

And then Wilfrid told them about his meeting with the Merritts, Gibsons, and Connie, and dwelt particularly on Connie's worthy conduct.

The general was much amused. 'She shall come home,' he said; 'her aunt need not provide for her any longer; there is no necessity now.'

It was then decided that, the very next day, Mrs Clifford, Wilfrid, and Tottie should go to live at the old Hall, taking with them Sarah as Tottie's nursemaid.

Wilfrid and Norman were very happy indeed when at last they were able to share each other's rooms, lessons, and enjoyments.

But they did not forget to look out for abuses, and try to remedy them by every means in their power. All the oppressed animals in the village were looked after, and their owners induced to be more merciful. But the boys found it a much more difficult matter to help poor Molly Smith and her family by attacking her brother's laziness.

The two young 'Knights' went together to the cottage, when they thought Mike would be in, for the purpose of giving him, in the first instance, 'a good talking to,' and very much did the young man resent their interference.

'It 's all very well for the likes of you,' he said, 'to talk about working; you 've got a good berth of it. You 've fallen on your feet! You must leave me to get what bit o' pleasure I can in my poor life. I don't ask for much; a pot o' beer and a seat at the White Elephant 's all I want.'

The boys thought rightly that this showed a very bad state of mind, so they talked very seriously to Mike, and, finally, Norman told him Kingsley's story of the people who came away from the Kingdom of Hard Work because they wanted to be idle. Having described the dreadful calamities which befell them, he ended by saying impressively, 'And this state of things went on until at last there was only one of them left, and when Monsieur du Chaillu, the great explorer, saw him, he thought he was a baboon, so he lifted up his gun to shoot him. And the poor fellow tried to say, "Am not I a man and a brother?" but it was so long since he had spoken that he could stammer out nothing but, "Ub-ub-ub-ub-ub-ub-boo!' so M. du Chaillu thought he was a monkey, and shot him, and he died!'

'Yes, he *died!*' said Wilfrid solemnly, and then began to remind him what a plucky little brother Tom he had, and how hard the child was working in his (Wilfrid's) old place at Mr White's.

'That may be,' said Mike, 'you 've helped *him* on. But nobody ain't agoin' to give *me* a place.'

'Yes,' said Norman, 'my father will, at the Hall. He will let you have work in the gardens if you like to apply for it.'

But it was in vain they talked and argued; Mike would not promise to try to work, and at last, feeling quite disheartened, they left him. A little way from the cottage they met poor Molly, returning from the other end of the village, and stopped to tell her what they had been doing.

'Thank you, sirs,' said she; 'I don't think anything will do him good. He cares for nothing but drinking and smoking with the worst men in the village. See, there's one of 'em goin' to the house for him now,' pointing to a villainous-looking man who was coming in their direction, and she sobbed, as she went on.

CHAPTER XII.

KNIGHTLY DEEDS.

Knight of a better era,
  Without reproach or fear!
Said I not well that Bayards
  And Sidneys still are here?
J. G. WHITTIER, *The Hero.*

IT was a mild Christmas that year. In the old Hall at Brentwood the servants had all been busy making preparations for unusual festivities. The wide old hall was decorated lavishly with evergreens, and so were the kitchens, the servants' hall, and the young gentlemen's study. The cooks too had been very busy, and the cellars and store-rooms were full of daintily cooked viands. For General Grey meant to entertain many of the peasantry in honour of his newly-found niece and her children, and by way of having a general rejoicing. All the old people in the village were to come to dinner on Christmas Day, and the labourers and their wives to tea. And then all the school children were to have their treat —tea and a Christmas-tree—the next day, and

parents too were to be allowed to come and join them.

'They 'll never say uncle is miserly again,' said Wilfrid delightedly. 'They 'll know now he never was. It was only that he felt so unhappy because he had lost mother that he shrank away from every one. I 'm afraid I should be just as bad myself if I lost her!'

And Norman, to whom this was confided, was of opinion that he should be even worse. The poor boy had never known his own mother, and his heart had been completely won when Mrs Clifford told him that Wilfrid's brother in arms would henceforward be to her as a son.

And now it was the day before Christmas-eve, and Connie and Gerard were expected home for the holidays. They were both to come by the train which arrived at Upper Brentwood Station at four in the afternoon. Mrs Clifford knew they would feel a little strange at coming to their new home, so she accepted her uncle's offer of the carriage that she might drive to meet them. The general said he could not accompany her, as he had to go somewhere on business, but he told the boys they might do so. However Wilfrid and Norman had one of their own knightly deeds to perform, namely, a couple of blankets—bought with their combined pocket-money—to take to Widow Smith, and they

were not able to get home in time to go with their mother. They therefore set off on foot, taking a short cut across the fields, and hoping they would still arrive at the station as soon as she did.

As they were walking, Wilfrid began talking about his little brother, and about a letter he had had that morning from an old school-friend, telling him that Gerard had proved his heroism by jumping into the water to save a small boy, who had got out of his depth whilst learning to swim. He was hardly less than Gerard, but the latter clung to him and kept hold until help came.

'He's such a plucky little fellow,' Wilfrid was saying, when they were startled by a hoarse voice shouting to them, and, turning, they saw a man, some little way behind, gesticulating wildly.

'Why, it's Mike Smith!' exclaimed Norman; 'what can be the matter?'

'It's Mike, sure enough!' said Wilfrid.

'Stop! Stop!' shouted Mike, coming hurrying after them.

'What's the matter?' cried the boys.

Mike could scarcely speak when he got up to them. Great drops stood out on his forehead, his face was flushed, his eyes inflamed. The boys thought he had been drinking. But they were mistaken.

'There's been some men'—Mike turned his head

aside as he spoke—'layin' timber across t' line, and the four train's nearly due!' And he sobbed aloud in his remorse at what he had been helping to do.

The boys turned very pale.

Timber across the line! The four train! Connie! Gerard! With lightning speed these thoughts passed through their minds, then they ran up a slight hill between them and the railway line.

Mike stood looking after them for a moment; then, with a wild cry, he turned and disappeared; never to be seen in Surrey any more.

'Look! look! it's there!' cried Norman, pointing to where some fallen larches had been dragged across the line.

'And look there!' cried Wilfrid.

In the distance could be seen the smoke of the advancing train. What were they to do? If they ran their fastest, they might reach the railway line before the train came up to that point, but they would have no time to do anything. They had no means of stopping the train. Their wildest shouts could not be heard above the noise it made as it came tearing along. A cry of horror burst from Wilfrid's lips.

Suddenly, they saw a man run forward on to the line and stand holding up both arms. He had taken off his coat, and his white shirt sleeves were

conspicuous against the dark background of some evergreen firs close by.

It was General Grey who stood there, regardless of the danger to himself. Would those in the advancing train see him?

For one moment the boys hesitated, then they ran down towards him.

On came the train. Firm stood the living signal in the middle of the line. It was seen. The engine slackened speed.

The general could do no more. Why then did he still stand there? He was twenty yards nearer the train than were the obstacles on the line. Why did he not come off? His work was done.

'Father!' cried Norman. 'Father, come off!'

But still the general stood calmly surveying the advancing train, his thoughts full of thankfulness that he had saved so many lives; his fancy picturing the joyous meeting between the little ones and their mother.

His absence of mind had well-nigh caused his death.

But Wilfrid sprang on to the line, and pulled his great-uncle on one side.

It was only just in time. The engine passed over the spot where General Grey had stood, and stopped within two yards of the timber.

Then a burst of cheers rang through the air as

passengers and spectators—who seemed to have sprung up everywhere—united to do honour to the brave man who had saved the train, and the no less brave boy who had saved him.

'Have you thanked God, Wilfrid, that He enabled you to do an heroic deed to-day?' whispered his mother, as she bade him good-night.

'Yes. But, mother, I'm so sorry for Norman; he feels it so that he didn't do it. And I'm sure, mother, if he'd thought of it, just as I did all in that dreadful moment, he'd have done exactly the same.'

'No, I don't think I could have done it,' said Norman; 'I was so frightened, I couldn't stir.'

'But I know, if you hadn't seen me do it, you'd have done it yourself,' persisted Wilfrid. Then, when Norman passed on to go to bed, he said to his mother, rather wistfully, 'Mother, it's so nice to have all we want, but do you think I can be as good a knight as if we were still poor?'

'Yes, Wilfrid,' said Mrs Clifford. 'There is a way—to be poor in spirit, that is it; you might be an errand-boy, or an errand-man all your life, and not have the "humility in poverty" the old knights prized so much; and you may have it, even with this world's riches—as Abraham had, and many others—if you strive to be lowly in heart.'

'I hope I shall,' said Wilfrid humbly. 'I think

you 're right. I know when I was an errand-boy I felt prouder once or twice than I have ever done since I came here.' Then, hiding his face against his mother's shoulder, he confessed, 'I *did* feel so horridly proud when I *would* get down from the coach because aunt called me disreputable! I thought in my heart I was much more honourable than she.'

'Don't you think, dear,' said Mrs Clifford, after a pause, 'there 's been just one flaw, if I may call it so, in your striving after knightliness; and that is, that you haven't thought quite enough about your Grand-master? If you had thought more about Him, you wouldn't have seemed to yourself to be getting on quite so fast; but in reality you would have got on much more rapidly.'

'I believe you are right,' said Wilfrid, earnestly. 'Mother, I will try in future.' And then he followed Norman up-stairs.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LITTLE KNIGHTS' SOCIETY.

Kind hearts are more than coronets.
TENNYSON.

THE next morning Wilfrid, being alone with his little brother, questioned him about his experiences at school, and the child owned he had been much teased at first.

'But it won't be quite so bad for the next boys who come,' he said.

'How's that?' asked Wilfrid.

After much hesitation, Gerard said, 'Well, you know it's all *your* doing, Wilfie, and it's quite a secret yet.'

'What's my doing? And what's a secret? Be quick!' impatiently.

'Our society—the Little Knights of Wakefield,' said Gerard, quickly; 'and oh, Wilfie, they do so want you *to write them out some rules.* Please do —you must—I've told them all I know; and they think it's *grand.* And Dr and Mrs Metcalf are

delighted. Mrs Metcalf says she's glad you ever came to their school.'

'Me! Little Knights of Wakefield! Mrs Metcalf said that! Oh, Gerard, what *are* you talking about?' asked Wilfrid in a tone of surprise, and then shaking his head in his old manner when perplexed.

'Well, you see it all came out. They couldn't think how it was I did—well, something they didn't quite expect such a little boy to do—and they pressed me till I told them a little; then Mrs Metcalf told them the story of the Knight of St John. Oh, she did tell it well, and then the doctor came in, and he said something about your trying to be like the knight Dieudonné, and how he wished we all would. And then, afterwards, when he and Mrs Metcalf had gone away, Dicky Jubb and Charlie Brown and Ned Fisher came to me and asked a lot of questions, and wanted to know if you were still trying.'

'Oh, did you tell them?' asked Wilfrid, growing now very red in his turn.

'Please forgive me, Wilfie,' stammered the little boy. 'I told them about your Rules of Knighthood you keep pinned on the wall in your bedroom, and they said they'd give anything, *anything* to have them. And we used to have such talks about it all, till one day Charlie—he's such a nice boy!—said, "We've talked plenty, let's *begin.*" And so

they said, "Yes, we will," and now seven of the twelve boys at Dr Metcalf's are trying to be like the Knight of St John—and, oh, Wilfie, they do *want your rules.*'

'I never heard of such a thing!' cried Wilfrid, springing up in his excitement. 'Who would have thought it? Go on; tell me some more.'

'Mrs Metcalf got to know,' said Gerard excitedly, ''cause Dicky Jubb tells her everything, and she said it was a *very good idea*, and she gave us a motto for our society. Oh, Wilfie, wasn't it nice? she said we couldn't wear any sign outside, like the mantles the first knights wore, or the coronets worn by princes and dukes, so she said we were to have for our motto, "Kind hearts are more than coronets," and that would always remind us that kindness to others was to be our principal aim. Oh, and the boys *are* so kind now. There's no teasing when a new boy comes; every new boy's under the special protection of all the seven of us.'

'Was that why you held that boy up so bravely when he got out of his depth the other day?' Wilfrid asked.

'Oh, Wilfrid, who told you?' asked Gerard, hiding his face against the cushions.

'One of the fellows. I say, it was awfully plucky of you.'

'Oh, well, you know, I couldn't be a knight and let go; could I?'

'Well, not exactly. And what do the other five fellows who are not knights do?'

'Oh, they tease a good deal. But they're ashamed to do unkind things now; and we're hoping they will join us, too, before long. We're trying to win them.'

Then Norman joined them, and Wilfrid delightedly told him all about it.

'And now Mrs Metcalf's got some pretty cards printed with our names on, and the letters M.S.L.K.W. on after them;' said Gerard, 'and we all know that stands for Member of the Society of Little Knights of Wakefield, and underneath is our motto. But we *do* want to have your rules printed on the other side, Wilfie.'

'We shall have to condense them then,' said Wilfrid, laughing.

'No, you mustn't 'dense them,' said Gerard; 'the boys want to have them *exactly* as you have them yourself.

'I'll type-write you seven copies,' said Norman, getting up and sitting down to his type-writer. 'That shall be my first contribution to the cause.'

'Oh, thank you,' said the little boy, following him to the table and looking at the machine with great admiration. Then he said in a low tone, 'I

shall tell the boys about Wilfie saving uncle's life, when I get back.'

Norman nodded. 'But don't tell him,' he whispered.

A little later in the day, when the brothers in arms were alone, Wilfrid said, 'I 'm rather proud of Gerard.'

'So am I,' said Norman.

'It 'll do a lot of good in that school if the boys are bound to be kind to every one,' Wilfrid said thoughtfully.

The two were silent a little while, then Norman said, 'It 's a pity there can't be little knights all over!'

'Yes,' said Wilfrid, 'the Little Knights of England wouldn't sound bad.'

'I think,' said Norman, 'the idea will spread. You see it *is* spreading at Dr Metcalf's.'

'Yes,' said Wilfrid, 'I think it will.'

He became silent again. But his thoughts were very busy. Why couldn't there be societies of Little Knights throughout the land? It would cost nothing. There were no difficulties to overcome. And how grand it would be if every one were kind and good to those in distress!

'I wish I were a man, Norman,' he said, at length; 'I 'd try to start the Society of Little Knights all over England.'

Norman looked up. 'I'm thinking, Wilfrid,' he said, '*little Gerard didn't wait till he was a man.*'

There was another long silence; then Wilfrid said, 'But what can boys who are not at school do?'

An idea occurred to Norman. He exclaimed eagerly, 'Let's write a letter to the newspaper! That's the way people do when they want to—to stir up the—the public mind.'

'Capital!' exclaimed Wilfrid, 'only, perhaps, we ought to show it to mother before we send it.'

'I move an amendment, as they say at meetings,' said Norman. 'We'll write to a good boys' paper: they'll be more likely to see it there than in a newspaper.

The two boys were very busy for half an hour; then Norman type-wrote a clean copy of the following letter:

DEAR MR EDITOR—We should like to call the attention of your boy-readers to the following facts. It is very true that chivalry and the noble rules of knighthood are becoming more and more a thing of the past. So boys are often rude, unkind, and hard-hearted. It need not be so. A very little boy has been the means of a society being formed in a boy's school, which tries to revive the beautiful chivalry of the past. The boys who are members of this society, bear the name (amongst themselves) of The Little Knights of —— (the name of their town), and their aim is to copy the example of Dieudonné, the

Knight of St John who killed the dragon. Being unable to wear any outward sign, they take as their motto, 'Kind hearts are more than coronets,' and hold themselves bound to succour the distressed.

Would it not be nice if other boys would try to follow the example of these boys who have formed such a good society? It *costs nothing*—only a little trouble and the thing is done. Please print this.

Yours obediently,

The brothers in arms { NORMAN GREY. / WILFRID CLIFFORD.

P.S.—We will send more information to any one desirous of forming another society of this sort, or perhaps we should say a branch of this society.

Then they showed the letter to Mrs Clifford, and told her why they had written it, and she was very glad, and allowed it to be posted.

'It may do a great deal of good,' she said, 'and I am very pleased, my dear boys, that you have been so usefully employed.'

'And, mother,' said Wilfrid, 'aren't you glad Jerry has done so much for the'——

'For the *cause*,' she said, smiling; 'indeed I am.'

'And he's so humble about it, mother,' said Wilfrid. 'It must have been very hard to talk to the boys about it all—and he's so shy too—I don't know how he could. I never could say a word about it to any one but Mrs Metcalf—oh! and Dr Metcalf once. But Jerry doesn't take a bit of credit

to himself. He doesn't seem to know he's done anything praiseworthy.'

Mrs Clifford's eyes were glistening with happy tears. She saw there was some one else besides Gerard who didn't seem to know he had done anything praiseworthy. Yet it was Wilfrid, more than Gerard, who had really been the cause of the chivalrous little society being formed at Dr Metcalf's. Mrs Clifford had that morning received a long letter from Mrs Metcalf, telling her all about it, and saying in conclusion :

'All this has resulted from Wilfrid's noble endeavour to copy the chivalrous doings of the knights of olden times. Dr Metcalf and I are very thankful that your dear boy came to our school, and we are pleased to find that little Gerard is following in his footsteps.'

But, of course, Wilfrid's mother did not say a word about all this to him, for she did not wish to spoil his sweet unconsciousness of merit. So she only said, 'Yes, Gerard 's improved very much.'

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION—FURTHER RESULTS.

Though all the wide world over
You should seek for bonds to bind,
Still the slightest chain, love-woven,
Is the strongest you can find.

E. DAWSON.

'NORMAN,' said Wilfrid, drawing him into a recess where they were hidden from view behind a curtain, 'isn't it sad to see poor Molly Smith—her's is the only miserable face here!'

It was the evening of the day after Christmas, the village children were having tea at the Hall, and now they and their parents and friends—amongst whom was the little Cliffords' dear old nurse, were playing games. Only poor Molly Smith had stolen into a dark corner, where Wilfrid had seen her crying.

'If only Mike had been told about the knights—especially the Knight of St John—while he was quite young,' said Norman, 'what a different man he might have grown!'

'Yes,' said Wilfrid. 'Norman, I've been thinking'——

'Yes,' said Norman, 'so have I,' and they both looked towards Gerard.

'If such a little boy as Gerard could talk to boys,' began Norman, and then hesitated.

'I know what you mean,' said Wilfrid; 'we ought to be much more able to talk to poor village lads.'

'Let's do it,' said Norman.

'There's mother; I'll ask her if we may,' said Wilfrid running off.

In a few moments he came bounding back, and said, 'Mother says we may try. I'm to ask all the boys to come into the library. And then mother says *you* had better tell them the story of Dieudonné, then I'll tell them about Gerard's society at Dr Metcalf's, and then we'll ask them if they would like to join such a society. If they would, mother will see about cards for them, but we are to get all their names. Mother says she doesn't see why poor boys can't try to be knights, as well as gentlemen. "It costs *nothing;*" she said, quoting our letter, with pride, "only a little trouble."'

And so they began inviting the young villagers to come into the library.

'Is it a plot?' asked the general, overhearing.

'A very deep one,' answered Wilfrid's mother, smiling at her boys, as she called them both.

The general was satisfied that, if she were in it, no harm would be done; and so he proposed that the next game should be one for girls only—an arrangement which prevented the withdrawal of the boys from exciting observation.

In the library Norman told them the story of Dieudonné. And then Wilfrid said what his little brother had done to found the Society of the Little Knights of Wakefield. The boys were much impressed, and when Wilfrid ended by asking if they would like to be members of such a society, every boy in the room said, 'Yes.'

That was the beginning of the Brentwood Society of 'Little Knights,' and every boy who joined it received a prettily printed card with his name and the important M.S.L.K.B. upon it, together with a sheet of type-written 'rules of knighthood' from Norman.

With the help of Mrs Clifford, the scheme worked well, and the Brentwood boys became gentler, kinder, and better than any in the neighbourhood.

About a fortnight after the brothers in arms' letter had been sent to the boys' paper, it appeared there in a column devoted to correspondence.

The editor had added, 'This is a very good idea —*Ed.*'

Wilfrid and Norman were never tired of reading their letter; it looked so nice in print; and just

before Gerard returned to school two answers to it appeared in the boys' paper. One was from a boy who seemed very much pleased at the idea of such societies being formed; he begged for information. And so Wilfrid and Norman sent him their rules, and a type-written copy of the story of Dieudonné, the Knight of St John, whereupon a brisk correspondence commenced, which led to a society of 'Little Knights' being formed in the school to which the stranger boy belonged.

The other letter was as follows:

DEAR MR EDITOR—I 'm so interested to read about the society of Little Knights. But I should like to remind your readers that there was One, long before, who started a society which must now have spread *almost all over the world*, whose members are bound to keep all the best laws of chivalry. Every Christian is bound to be kind, merciful, self-denying, and to follow the example of One greater even than Dieudonné, the Knight of St John.

Please, Mr Editor, I don't want to discourage those nice boys who have tried to form the new society; only I should like to remind *all* boys that they *are* in the older, greater society, and, if they are neglecting the rules of it, it is their fault and not that of Christianity.

Yours, Mr Editor, very faithfully,

JEDDIE SCHOFIELD.

P.S.—Perhaps the boys who don't see their way to be in the new society may like to be reminded that they are in the old one.

Mrs Clifford said she liked the tone of this letter

very much. 'And isn't it nice, my dear boys, she said, to think that the older, greater society, as the writer says, is established "almost all over the world?"'

'Then is our society unnecessary?' asked Wilfrid, looking disappointed.

'No, indeed,' replied his mother, 'it is most useful. It is like a circle within a circle, keeping all within it bright and vigorous. There are so many rules, boys find it easy to forget, and anything which helps to remind them is of the greatest service. I should dearly like to know there were "Little Knights" all over the kingdom.'

By-and-by, the holidays came to an end, as holidays, even the brightest and happiest, do, and Connie and little Gerard returned to their respective schools, while the brothers in arms applied themselves steadily to their studies under the able tuition of the general.

Hard did they work at their several tasks; with friendly rivalry did each try to excel; loyal to their friendship were they alike in playtime and in the schoolroom, and, as we have seen, diligent in looking after the Brentwood boys; and when, at last, they proceeded to Oxford, and became distinguished there for industry, talents, and nobleness of heart, their love for one another won for them from their fellow-collegians the name of the 'Inseparables.'

And when, after those busy, happy days, the two young men had to choose for themselves professions, they resolved that they would fight together, side by side, against the evils of sin and sorrow. So Wilfrid became a clergyman, like his father, because it seemed to him he could thus the more closely follow in the footsteps of his beloved 'Grand-master; and Norman became a doctor, that he, too, might be, in an especial way, a little like the Great Physician who went about healing the sick. And then they returned to live in the Surrey village, where they had already so much influence for good, and where they had first resolved to join hand in hand in the knightly conflict against oppression, wrong, and many other woes to which humanity is subject.

There let us leave them, living honourable and useful lives, surrounded by their dear ones, and respected and esteemed by all, both rich and poor, with whom they came in contact. Perhaps the world only saw in them a country doctor, and, at first, a country curate, but Wilfrid's mother thought that the heart of her elder son, and that too of his chosen friend, were very like 'the heart of the best knight that ever lived.'

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